

THE
REVELATION OF JOHN;
WITH NOTES,

CRITICAL, EXPLANATORY, AND PRACTICAL,

DESIGNED FOR BOTH PASTORS AND PEOPLE.

BY
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“Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I unless some man should guide me?”—ACTS VIII: 30, 31.

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P R E F A C E.

THE earnest request of many readers of my *Notes on Daniel*, coupled with a deep conviction of the importance of applying the same general principles to this book as to that, has induced me to prepare this volume for the public. It seemed desirable also to complete the prophetic books.—Those who are familiar with the numerous commentaries on this book extant in our language will perhaps marvel that I have passed them with so little notice. To such I would say that my system of interpretation does not rest on any of those commentaries, and does not need them for its fair and full presentation. I even feared that, to arrest the course of my argument in order to bring in to any considerable extent the diverse views of other critics, would not only encumber my book in general but my argument in particular. Those who wish to see how other critics have interpreted this book will readily gain access to their volumes.—My aim has been to evolve the laws of interpretation applicable to this book out of the book itself; out of the already extant prophecies of the Old Testament; and out of the history of those times. I dare not assume that this effort is free from imperfections; but that this method of interpretation—this conception of its just principles—must control the construction of this book, seems to me too plain to admit of any question. I lay down my pen therefore in the hope that in whatever points my execution of this plan has been defective, abler hands, coming after, will bring it to perfection.

The Greek text of this book is admitted to be more defective than that of any other portion of the New Testament. I have aimed to introduce all the recent corrections which seemed important for their bearing upon the thought.—A favoring Providence has brought within the reach of modern scholars several very ancient and valuable manuscripts which were unknown to those who revised the text for our received English

version. Three of these are worthy of special mention: the Alexandrine, dating probably about A.D. 350, made in Alexandria (Egypt), and brought from Constantinople to England in A.D. 1628; the Vatican, supposed to date about A.D. 300, long imprisoned in the archives of the Papal Vatican, from which it takes its name, but brought slowly and with difficulty into the hands of able critics within the past twenty-five years; and the Sinaitic, obtained from a convent on Mt. Sinai, supposed to date from about A.D. 325, but unknown till the year 1844, and only within the last ten years carefully collated and brought before the learned of our times. Tischendorf's edition of the English New Testament gives the variations of the text which appear in two of these very ancient manuscripts.—Unfortunately, the Revelation of John is wanting in the Vatican.

The theory that prophetic days really mean years—that all periods of time named in prophecy must be multiplied by three hundred and sixty to get the actual duration—has controlled the interpretation of the Apocalypse as given by many English and American critics. My views of this theory have been given in the Appendix to my Commentary on Daniel (pages 459–466). Since this volume may fall into the hands of some who may not have access to that, I have placed that special dissertation in this Appendix also.

A special examination of the teachings of Christ, and of His apostles, in regard to the *time* of His then future comings, commenced with design to append it to the present volume, as having important bearings upon certain passages in the Revelation which speak of Christ as “coming quickly,” at length took so broad a range that it has been thought best to have it appear in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July number for 1871.

HENRY COWLES.

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REVELATION.

INTRODUCTION.

It lies upon the face of this book that it was written in a time of persecution. The writer was an exile in the barren isle of Patmos because of his testimony for Jesus Christ. He wrote the book to those who were his "companions in tribulation," like himself in the point of suffering and endurance for the Kingdom of Jesus (1: 9). The whole book is addressed to the seven churches of Asia (1: 4), while the second and third chapters comprise special messages to each one of these churches by name. A careful attention to these special messages will show that those Christians were either actually suffering persecution, or at least were exposed and in constant peril. The letters speak of their "patience" (*i. e.*, suffering); of their "tribulation;" of some who had "kept the word" (command) "of my patience" and obtained the promise that Jesus would "keep them from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth" (3: 10); of those who "had not denied my faith even in those days wherein Antipas, my faithful martyr, was slain among you" (2: 13). They were exhorted to "be faithful unto death," with the promise of gaining thus a crown of life. Each message closes with a specific and glorious promise to "*him that overcometh.*" To them the battle of life was "unto blood."—Altogether to the same purport is the body of this "Revelation of St. John." First, a book (5: 1) or scroll of destiny written on both sides is unrolled, disclosing its contents by sections as one seal after another is broken. One of these seals (6: 9-11) significantly opens to view "under the altar the souls of

them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held ;" and they are heard to cry with a loud voice: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Then "white robes" (of prospective victory and joy) "were given to every one of them, and it was said to them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren that should be killed as they were should be fulfilled." The obvious construction of this passage implies that persecution was then raging; that some faithful martyrs had already fallen; *that their murderers were then living on the earth*, their crimes yet unpunished; and that other Christian martyrs, of their brethren, were to be killed as they had been before God's sword of retribution should smite the murderers.—Bearing to the same conclusion are the scenes of chap. 7: 9-17—the myriads of saved ones arrayed in white who have "come out of great tribulation," but are seen at rest in the fullness of joy before the throne of God. So the two witnesses (of chap. 11), representative characters, indicate an age of faithful testimony for Jesus which cost human blood but ended in glorious victory for truth and for truth's Great King. So throughout the scenes unfolded in the second part of this book (13-18) we have bloody persecution, led on by the Great Dragon, his auxiliary forces being the savage wild "beasts" (the first and the second) and the great harlot city—that woman seen in vision "drunk with the blood of saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (17: 6)—throughout which scenes there was abundant demand for "the patience of the saints" (13: 10 and 14: 12 and 12: 17), and for the assurance of blessedness to those that "die in the Lord" and so "rest from their labors." It can not fail to impress the attentive reader that every feature of this book is made to bear upon the case of Christian men and women breasting the fire and flame of persecution. They are thought of as in the midst of such conflicts as try men's souls. They are precisely where they need to see the surpassing majesty and glory of their own risen Redeemer (1: 13-18). They need the assurance of his presence, walking amid the seven golden candlesticks, searching all hearts, witnessing every believer's personal conflicts, sufferings, faith, love and fidelity to his Master; where it must be cheering to see visions of myriads of men saved through blood and fire and to witness the ineffable glory of their joy, and where the judgments

of the Almighty on his foes are the pledge of speedy victory to Zion's King and people. Such comprehensively are the main points made in this book. Throughout they undeniably assume that the writer and his first readers were in the midst of bloody persecution, and therefore give us beyond dispute *the moral purpose of this book of Revelation.*

Let it now be strongly said and deeply pondered:—*This obvious and unquestionable moral purpose of the book may be relied on to guide us to its true interpretation.* For no interpretation can be a right one unless it bears naturally and squarely toward attaining the obvious purpose of the book. It can not be admissible to put upon it or any part of it a construction which would frustrate or even materially emasculate its moral purpose. The reason of this will be obvious. Every sensible and earnest author writes for a purpose and makes his points bear toward its attainment. His good sense will appear in the wisdom and effectiveness of his adaptation of means to his ends: his earnestness will be the guaranty that he will surely *try* to accomplish his purpose. Our author is wonderfully strong in his manifestations of *earnestness*—giving assurance therefore that he can not forget his great object in writing. We shall see that he is not deficient in the good sense that adapts his points to their obvious purpose. *

*Only for brevity's sake do I speak of this book as the product of John's own mind and heart. I hold the whole book to be *inspired*, and therefore really the mental product of John's Divine Teacher—the messages and the vision having been given him while "*in the Spirit.*" Their wise adaptation to great moral ends and that earnestness which breathes in every word and symbol are therefore primarily those of the Divine Spirit.—I extend the remark here made to the whole subject of language, style, symbol and figure. For the sake of brevity I speak of all points that arise under this comprehensive head as if John were the uninspired and only responsible author of the book, and every feature of the style were due to his own taste, his own cast of mind and modes of speech. This way of speaking of the language and poetry of a prophet is unobjectionable provided it be fully understood that it does not in any wise ignore his prophetic inspiration. For, however the fact may be explained, no one can deny that the style and language of each prophet is as truly his own, representing his own taste, culture, cast of mind and genius, as the style of Gibbon is his own, or the style of Carlyle, his. As to explanation of this fact, it may suffice to say that God speaks to his prophets, to each in his own tongue, as wise men now speak in one style to a child, in another to a youth or a man; in one style to men of no education; in another, to the educated, and in their own parlance to men of any given profession. That the inditing Spirit should adapt himself to the mind and tongue of each prophet is no mystery. The fact applies both to messages given to the prophet to be spoken or written verbatim, and to revelations made to his prophetic eye in vision, or through a revealing angel, or by any other mode of communicating the thought of God to the mind of man.

From these principles I infer that if the book was written in order to produce certain moral impressions and effects upon its first readers—men then living—it must have been in the main intelligible to those men. Its words, its pictured scenes, its symbols, its allusions to God's enemies soon to be destroyed, must have been brought down to the average level of their comprehension. The writer *meant* to be understood—*expected* to be; for he certainly must have known that what his readers could not understand could do them no good. On this point human nature was the same then as now: words and symbols which men can not understand are simply powerless. If the seven churches of Asia to whom John wrote this entire book (1: 4) could not understand the main and vital things it contains, then it was to them in just so far a dead letter—a book written in vain as to any effect upon them—a “revelation” that *revealed* nothing. The notion that the great body of this prophetic book was unintelligible to its first readers and therefore may be interpreted to-day to mean things which they could never have imagined, must be for every reason rejected. Think of the blessing promised to “him that readeth and to those that hear its words” (1: 3); think of the declared speedy fulfillment of its staple predictions (1: 1, 3, and 4: 1, and 22: 6, 10, 12, 20); the special blessing for those who keep *i. e.*, observe and obey those things written herein (1: 3, and 22: 7); the obvious need of just such sayings and showings to support the Christian faith and heroism of those churches at that time; the perfect adaptation of the things shown to meet their case and sustain their souls under the sternest and bloodiest of scenes. All these points conspire to show that the author wrote with a present object; consequently, sought to be understood; therefore must have made himself fairly intelligible to the average capacity of those church members; and so, by resistless inference, must be interpreted to mean what would lie within and not beyond the pale of their thought and conception.

I deem it the more important to show that the book had a great and then present moral purpose; what that purpose was; and the inference as to its interpretation that flows by necessity from it, because in my view these points give us the only reliable clue to its just interpretation. Overlooking these points or according to them only the least possible influence upon its interpretation, men have speculated upon this book in endless diversity, with no one

result more general and deep in the public mind than the breaking down of all confidence in prophecy and the special conclusion that nothing can be known with any certainty as to the true meaning of this book of Revelation.

As preliminary and essential steps in unfolding what I regard as the true sense of this book, I must treat,

I. *Of the Author.*

II. *Of the date of his writing.*

III. *Of his times*—his circumstances and those of his first readers.

IV. Of the question—*To whom* precisely was this book primarily addressed and therefore specially adapted?

V. The various indications in the book which locate its prophetic events in *place* and in *time*, and thus become landmarks to guide to its just interpretation.

VI. The *sources* of the writer's figurative imagery and the bearing of these sources upon his use of them in this book.

VII. The *principles or laws* which should control the interpretation of this book.

I. THE AUTHOR.

The writer calls himself simply "John" (1: 1, 4, 9, and 22: 8) with no further designation save that he is "his" (Jesus Christ's) "servant," and "your brother and companion in tribulation"—the same who was exiled to Patmos (1: 1, 9). He does not say John the Apostle, nor John the brother of James, or one of the sons of Zebedee; does not define himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (as in his gospel, 13: 23, and 19: 26, and 20: 2, and 21: 7, 20). Yet he makes no effort to disguise his person, but obviously assumes that his first readers will recognize him without fail by the indications given. It is therefore safe to conclude that he was well known throughout all those seven churches. This fact of itself leaves no room to doubt that he was the venerable and every-where known Apostle John. The church history of the early ages from the date of this epistle onward witnesses to no other John of such prominence and distinction—a father to the churches, known and beloved by all.

This question of authorship is not absolutely vital to the reception and usefulness of this book, provided it be admitted and satisfactorily shown that the author was one of the inspired men of the apostolic age. Yet if John the beloved disciple was truly the

author, it is refreshing to know it. In my view the proof that he was the author is entirely conclusive. Yet I am well aware that some very learned critics of our times deny his authorship, especially on the ground of the great diversity of style between this book and the fourth gospel and the three epistles attributed to John. Consequently the question should be the more carefully examined and the strong points of proof more fully presented.

1. In the first place the voice of the most ancient Christian Fathers is strongly and almost unanimously for him as the author.—The testimony of *Papias*, bishop of Hierapolis (Col. 4: 13) in Phrygia (flourished in the first years of the second century) and who may have seen John personally, shows only that he held the book to be of apostolic origin and worthy of our Christian faith (“axiopiston”). He says nothing adverse to the opinion that John was the author. The presumption is that in his day there was no occasion to affirm this.—The active life of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, spanned the first half of the second century and the latter years of the first. He is spoken of as a personal companion and disciple of John; but we reach his views on the point before us only by inference from the well known views of his pupil *Irenæus*. The latter speaks explicitly of the Apostle John as the author of this book.—*Justin Martyr* (flourished A. D. 140–164), the earliest author and scholar after the apostles, writes: “A man from among us” (Justin was of Palestine) “by name John, one of the apostles of Christ, in the revelations made to him, has prophesied that those who believe in our Messiah shall live a thousand years in Jerusalem,” etc.—*Melito*, bishop of Sardis (one of those seven churches), who flourished in the third quarter of the second century, “wrote a treatise on the Apocalypse of John.” This is the language of Eusebius (Book 4, chap. 26), and can be fairly construed of no other than John the Apostle.—*Theophilus*, bishop of Antioch (A. D. 169–180), is reported by Eusebius (Book 4, chap. 24) as drawing “testimony from the Apocalypse of John” in a work of his entitled, “Against the heresy of Hermogenis.”—Eusebius says the same of *Apollonius* (Book 5, chap. 18), who was of Asia Minor, latter part of the second century.—*Irenæus*, trained in Christian life and doctrine under Polycarp of Smyrna till about A. D. 150; then sent as a missionary to the south of France (Gaul), where he was bishop of Lyons (A. D. 177–202), witnesses abundantly that John the dis-

eiple of the Lord wrote the Apoccalypse. His testimony, found in his great work "Against Heresies," is chiefly in the form of quotations from the Apoccalypse, spoken of as "the words of John."—*Clement* of Alexandria (A. D. 192-220) quotes from this book with the remark, "As John says in the Apoccalypse."—*Tertullian* of Carthage (A. D. 199-220) in many passages refers to the Apoccalypse as being "the work of the Apostle John."—*Origen*, the greatest biblical scholar among the Christian fathers to his day; in early life of Alexandria (Egypt), but in later life of Palestine; born A. D. 185, died A. D. 254, makes his testimony signally explicit: "John who leaned on the bosom of Jesus has left us one gospel, and he wrote also the Apoccalypse." He speaks of this John as "being the son of Zebedee;" also as being "condemned to the Isle of Patmos for bearing his testimony to the word of truth."

This list of witnesses and recital of their testimony might be very greatly extended. I have selected the earliest witnesses because they are most likely to be original and direct, and therefore have the highest value. I see no reason to doubt that these witnesses give us the prevalent opinions of those who first received this book from the pen of John and of their successors—sons and grandsons, pupils and grand-pupils, of the nearest subsequent years.

2. In respect to historic testimony it should however be distinctly stated that a very few counter voices are heard; but their doubt or denial of the authorship of John is obviously traceable either (1) to doctrinal prejudice against the book; or (2) to their inference from its peculiarities of style, compared with the fourth gospel.—As to doctrinal prejudice, the facts are in brief that a few Christians in the second century and onward gave this book an extremely literal and even a repulsively gross and sensual interpretation, which so disgusted many of their brethren that they discredited the book itself, denying its divine authority, and of course denying that it was written by the Apostle John. It was apparently under the influence of this feeling that the scholarly *Dionisius* of Alexandria raised the question whether the John whose name appears in this book was not another man—a position which he supported by appealing to its diversity of style, compared with the fourth gospel. Such counter testimony considered as properly historic is obviously of no account. It fails to

touch the only really historic question, viz., What were the views of those who personally knew the author, and who received the book from his well-known hand? And what voice did they hand down to their children and to their pupils of the next and of succeeding generations? On this simply historic question there seems to be no ground for any difference of opinion.

3. *Internal traits* go far to prove that the same John who wrote the fourth gospel and the three epistles wrote also the Revelation. Note how he identifies himself by his use of special terms and phrases and by his dominant ideas of gospel truth, and also by his modes of conceiving and representing them.

(1.) Observe that he alone of all the New Testament writers, thinks and speaks of Jesus Christ as "*the Word of God.*" This name stands out prominently in the Revelation (19: 13): "His name is called the Word of God." It is equally prominent in the very opening of the fourth gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." . . . "And the Word was made flesh," etc. (1: 1, 14.) In the epistle also: "The Word of life" (1: 1), and in the disputed and doubtful passage (5: 7) "The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." [If we admit that this last passage came into our copies by interpolation, still it must have gained and held its place on the strength of its harmony with John's usage and with the views of the ancient church.]

(2.) By John alone of all the New Testament writers Jesus is thought of and seen as "a *Lamb slain* for an atoning sacrifice." We have this view in the Revelation. In the midst of the heavenly elders is seen "a Lamb as it had been slain," to whom they sing: "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood" (5: 6, 9, 12). "The book of life of the *Lamb slain* from the foundation of the world" (13: 8). The victors on the sea of glass sing the song of Moses and the *song of the Lamb* (15: 3). And in the same strain of thought—"To him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (1: 5). Now observe how perfectly in harmony with this way of thinking and speaking you find the fourth gospel: "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world" (1: 29, 36).—Peter approximates toward this (1 Eps. 1: 19), comparing Christ to a lamb, but no other New Testament writer save John fully reaches it.—The reader will bear in mind also that this figure is the more remarkable in the

Revelation because the tone and purpose of the book should more naturally present Christ as the *Lion* than as the Lamb—the Lion who treads down his foes rather than the Lamb who dies a sacrifice for his friends.

(3.) Allusions to the manna of the wilderness appear in the New Testament in this writer only; in Rev. 2: 17,—“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna:” and in the fourth gospel (6: 48, 58), “My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven” [the real manna].

(4.) Only in the imagery of this New Testament writer are the blessings of salvation, “waters of life,” given to all the thirsty ones. See in Rev. 21: 6, and 22: 1, 17. “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” “Let him that is athirst come. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” In his gospel history, see 7: 37: “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’”

(5.) In his style of thought and speech, preaching the gospel is “witnessing,” “testifying,” bearing testimony to the truth. We see this throughout the Apocalypse, *e. g.*, in 1: 2, and 2: 13 [“martyr” is the Greek word for *witness*], and 3: 14, and 6: 9, and 11: 3, 7, and 12: 11, 17, and 19: 10, and 20: 4, and 22: 16, 18, 20. In the fourth gospel we have the same use of this language, 5: 39, and 15: 26, 27, and 18: 37. “For this cause (said Jesus before Pilate) came I into this world that I should bear witness to the truth.” See also the author’s description of his work (21: 24): “This is the disciple which *testifieth* of these things and wrote these things; and we know that his *testimony* is true.” “Witnessing” appears in the same general sense in the first epistle (1: 2, and 5: 9, 10). These modes of thought and speech appearing prominently and uniformly throughout all his books go very far indeed to identify the author of them all as the same man.

(6.) We carry this argument but one step further when we adduce the fact that this book of Revelation and the fourth gospel are essentially at one in their great cardinal points of Christian faith, as well as in their peculiar forms of expression. No points of revealed truth can be more fundamental than the one already introduced above—*Jesus Christ an atoning sacrifice for the sins of*

men. We have seen that this view is prominent in the gospel, the epistle, and the Revelation. So also is the doctrine that *Jesus is King and Lord of all*, worthy of equal honor with the Father, and actually receiving it in heaven itself. The gospel gives us the eternal Word who "was in the beginning; was with God; and was God;" by whom "all things were made" (1: 1, 13); to whom "the Father hath committed all judgment" (5: 22), and who himself speaks of "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was" (17: 15). The first epistle indorses this doctrine in most concise but explicit terms:—"This is the true God and the eternal life" (1 John 5: 20). With surpassing fullness and splendor the Apocalypse corroborates this doctrine by its open visions of the homage and worship accorded by all the hierarchies of heaven in equal strains to "*Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever.*" This worship is supreme; none higher is known in heaven. It therefore indorses the true divinity of Jesus Christ, in harmony with both the fourth gospel and the epistles of John, and in a form of testimony than which none can be stronger.—In the same line of argument it might be shown that all these writings concur in presenting Jesus as the *life* of his people, their Shepherd, their Defender; while the Apocalypse makes specially prominent his relation as the *Avenger* of their martyred blood.

(7.) *Objections considered.*

The strong points of objection are,—(a.) The poetry and the symbols of the Apocalypse have a tene of grandeur and sublimity so unlike the plain simplicity and the metaphysical abstractness of the fourth gospel and of the epistles that they can not be supposed to have come from the same author.—To which I reply that the poetry and the prose of the same author are naturally very unlike. Compare the prosaic history given Ex. 14: 19-31, and 15: 19, with the poetic song of Ex. 15: 1-18. What could be more unlike? But the same Moses wrote both. Or compare the first two chapters of Habakkuk with the third; or Isa. 37 with Isa. 60; or Dan. 6 with Dan. 7; or Job, chapters 1 and 2, with any or all of the others; or 2 Sam. 22: 1 with vs. 2-51. Surely it is no strange thing that the same writer, especially if he have genius, imagination, and sublimity in him, should make his poetry very diverse from his prose. And whether we are able to give all the reasons for it or not, we have the fact that prophecy

does come to us clothed (usually) in the loftiest poetry and often in the grandest symbols. Yet these poetic and sublime prophets have given us also some very plain and unpoetic prose. To which it may appropriately be added that the author of the Apocalypse shows by manifold allusions that he has been reading those grand old Hebrew prophets, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, and that his mind is filled with their sublime conceptions. Is it then any marvel that his own style should catch their strain; or rather, that his soul should enkindle from contact with their seraphic fire?—Let us also bear in mind that the Apocalypse was probably written from ten to twenty years before the fourth gospel and the three epistles, and consequently when the writer had more of the fire and vivacity of his youth than when under the weight of more than fourscore years he penned his gospel and epistles. Men of the noblest powers must pass with the lapse of years from the buoyancy and glow of youth and manhood to the more calm sedateness of old age. Need it surprise us if their writings evince it?

(*b.*) It is objected that the tone of tenderness, sympathy, and love which appears in the fourth gospel is far removed from the sternness, the terror, and the vengeance which reign in the Apocalypse.—But are not the zephyrs and the hurricanes from the same God? The dews and the deluges—come they not from the same Author? The whispering calls of mercy and the thunder tones of the judgment trump—are they not from the same Jesus? Is there not one hour for beseeching men to be reconciled to God, and another hour for the vials of his wrath upon those whom no mercy can touch and no forbearance and no warnings can reclaim? And precisely to our present point, may not God employ the same tongue and pen to utter both the one and the other?—Specifically it is claimed that the three epistles of John breathe a tender spirit as from a loving father to his well-beloved children; but that the messages to the seven churches have the air of authority, reproof, and threatening.—This difference is rather strongly put, yet no one can deny that a measure of it exists. To account for it I suggest that in the messages to the seven churches the speaker is rather Jesus himself than John the amanuensis; and moreover, that the emergency was such as to call for the most solemn earnestness. The tone in those seven messages is rather that of tremendous earnestness than of asperity or vengeance. A fearful

strain was upon the piety of those churches—a time of stern and portentous trial through which none could pass unscathed unless their souls should be aroused to see their peril. Hence the spirit of those messages.

(c.) It is claimed that the original Greek of the Apocalypse is more tinged with Hebraistic words and grammatical forms than that of the known writings of John.—I reply, it is now generally conceded that the Aramean (a dialect of the Hebrew) was the spoken language in Palestine at the time of Christ, and therefore was the mother tongue of his Jewish disciples. When they began to push the gospel into the outlying countries, and to write out its records for the reading of the civilized world, a knowledge of Greek became a necessity. But being in their minds superinduced upon their vernacular Hebrew, it was inevitable that their newer Greek would be shaded more or less by their older Hebrew. Precisely this appears in every New Testament writer, yet in various degrees. I freely admit the fact put forward in the objection above-named, *i. e.*, that the Apocalypse is more deeply shaded with the Hebrew tint than the fourth gospel or the three epistles of John. But this fact can be accounted for without any serious damage to the evidence that the same John wrote the Apocalypse. For (1.) This Apocalypse was written (it is conceded by the best critics) several years earlier than the gospel and the epistles, when John was but recently arrived in Asia Minor from his Palestine home, and hence was less familiar with classic Greek and more fresh from his Aramean vernacular than in his later years: and (2.) His exile in Patmos, we must assume, was cheered by the deep and ardent study of the old Hebrew prophets. Fresh from their perusal, he turned to the writing of the Apocalypse—of which the book bears most abundant traces.—These important facts in his case suffice to show that his Hebraistic style in the Apocalypse compared with his gospel is altogether what we ought to expect. If the preponderance of Hebrew style were the other way—the more abundant traces in the later writings and not in the earlier, and when farther removed from the immediate influence of the old prophets, then the argument against the common authorship of all these books would be very strong, if not even conclusive.

(d.) A vast amount of labor has been expended to bring out a class of words which occur in the Apocalypse and not in the fourth gospel; and *vice versa*, another class from the fourth gospel, not

found in the Apocalypse. The same thing is also shown to some extent in respect to special grammatical forms.—But this sort of argument seems to me to have little force. It is offset in part by the fact of very considerable and indeed somewhat striking similarities, going to identify the author of both books as the same. And why may not all the real diversities be accounted for by the different dates of the books; the changes due to his greater familiarity with classic Greek after many more years of practical contact with it; and, not least, to the great difference in the subjects treated of—the difference natural between the loftiest poetry and the plainest prose?

II. THE DATE OF THE WRITING.

This question involves some real difficulty, especially on its historic side. Yet it has very considerable importance in its bearings upon the interpretation of the book, and therefore calls for a careful and candid examination.—On this question of *date*, critical opinions fall into two classes, one assigning it to the reign of Nero (about A. D. 64–68), and the other to the reign of Domitian (A. D. 95–96). It is well known that violent persecution raged at both these periods, and it is possible that John was banished to Patmos twice—*i. e.*, by both Nero and Domitian, and that this fact occasioned the confused and discordant notices that appear in the early fathers in regard to the time of his banishment and the date of this book.

In respect to *date*, I will speak,

1. Of the *internal evidence*—that which appears in the book itself; and

2. Of the *external*, as found in fragmentary notices by the Christian fathers.

1. *Internal.* Under this head I adduce

(1.) The fact that the culpable practices which appear in the seven churches (chaps. 2, 3) are those of the early and mid-apostolic ages—precisely those against which the churches of Asia were specially warned by the circular “epistle” of the first Christian council (Ae. 15), and which appear in Paul’s first letter to the church at Corinth. Thus in Pergamos the practices indicated as “the doctrine of Balaam” were these two: eating things offered to idols and fornication (Rev. 2: 14). The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, appearing in both Pergamos and Ephesus, was very sim

ilar (2: 15). Precisely the same practices appear in Thyatira, inculcated by one called "Jezebel" (2: 20). By a remarkable coincidence, the evils against which the first council at Jerusalem specially warned the churches were prominently these two (Acts 15: 20, 29). In Corinth the eating of things offered to idols was one of the live questions then pressing sharply upon the churches (1 Cor. 8). I need not say that fornication was a second special subject for rebuke and warning in that church.—Thus it appears that the great moral questions and immoral practices which pressed sorely upon the churches at the date of the Jerusalem council (A. D. 50 or 52) and at the date of Paul's letters to Corinth (A. D. 57-58) were the very things condemned in the seven churches of Asia.—But it will be asked, Were not these evils rife in the age of Domitian? Possibly they were; but the latest N. T. books, viz., the gospel and the epistles of John, give no hint of it. Other historical records of that age are scanty; but so far as I know are silent on these points. It is intrinsically improbable that the questions in regard to eating meats offered to idols would have continued practically unsettled forty years (from A. D. 50 to A. D. 90).—This argument amounts in my view only to a strong probability—not to a demonstration.

(2.) The churches of Asia were suffering severely from pernicious teachers *claiming to be Jews*. In Ephesus were some who said they were apostles but were not (2: 2); in Smyrna the troublers said they were Jews, but were more "the synagogue of Satan" (2: 9); in Philadelphia were the same class precisely (3: 9); while the personage called Jezebel (2: 20), claiming to be a prophetess, was probably a Jewess also.—Thus the troublers of the seven churches at the date of this book were remarkably well defined—either actually being Jews, or at least claiming to be.—Now let it be also considered that the first council was called (A. D. 50 or 51) to counteract the mischiefs of Judaizing teachers. The letters of Paul to the Galatians (A. D. 56) and to the Colossians (A. D. 62) disclose the presence and mischiefs of the same set of men. These were churches of Asia, adjacent to the seven to whom John wrote. Paul's first letter to Timothy (1: 3, 4, 7), written A. D. 65, alludes to men causing trouble in Ephesus and puts upon them two Jewish marks—"given to endless genealogies;" and "desiring to be teachers of the law." Indeed the early apostolic age was constantly annoyed by this class

of men.—Thus we see the most entire coincidence between the case of the seven churches as it appears in these letters, and the case of other churches of Asia in the years A. D. 50–66.

Here too (as before) the question must be met: Did not this annoyance from Jewish and Judaizing teachers continue down to the age of Domitian?—I answer, All existing historical evidence is strongly against it. The later books of the New Testament give not the least allusion to such teachers. While the earliest heresies that annoyed the Christian churches came from Judaism, the next in order—the second generation of them—sprang from contact with Pagan philosophies and science, “falsely so called”—to which it is generally conceded some of the latest writers of the New Testament allude.—What history thus testifies, the nature of the case strongly sustains. The fall of Jerusalem and the utter destruction of the temple naturally struck Judaism down. More than one million of Jews perished in that fearful fall; the rest were scattered far abroad. The hope of bringing the Gentile converts into Jewish ritualism was forever blasted; the power and prestige of this Judaizing element fell, never to rise. Hence the inference seems irresistible that the seducers in the seven churches when John wrote must have been of the age of Nero and not of the age of Domitian. Of course the book was written in the former age and not in the latter.—It may not be amiss to suggest that we have here another special element in the retributions upon the Jews of which chapters 4–11 speak, since they are before us not only as the first and most malign *persecutors* of the infant Christian church, but also as its first, most persistent, most annoying and dangerous *seducers*.

(3.) The seventh chapter of the Apocalypse presents a scene in which four mighty angels are holding in suspense the fearful elements of retributive vengeance until another angel might place the seal of God upon the foreheads of his faithful servants. The central idea and also in the main its costume seem to be taken from Ezek. 8 and 9: “Go through the midst of the city and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all its abominations:” this done, let the others go through the city and smite, only come not near any man who bears the mark! Here in the scenes of this apocalyptic vision, John first hears the number of the sealed—“one hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel,” and indeed definitely twelve

thousand from each of the twelve tribes. That these represent the Christian converts gathered from the lineal Jews is made doubly certain by the counterpart of this first sealing, viz., the view of "a great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues;" that is, *Gentile converts* of every land and tribe, seen before the throne already clothed in white, ascribing their salvation to God and the Lamb. So much the gospel had then achieved already. The scathing judgments that were about to smite the Jewish world and in due time the Gentile, would find so many garnered in safety, housed in their eternal home before the storm should burst.—Now the definite point of my argument is that this sealing of Jewish converts, considered as a prophecy, appears to be precisely coincident with that of Jesus Christ in his prediction of the fall of Jerusalem and of the previous gathering of his elect, as given in Mat. 24: 31 and Mark 13: 27. The personal preaching of Jesus and the earliest mission labors of his disciples turned first to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mat. 10: 5, 6, 13). Forty years God waited and wrought patiently to gather in those lost ones. Jesus prophetically represents this gathering as to be done within the life-time of that generation (Mat. 24: 34 and Mark 13: 30), *i. e.*, to be finished before Jerusalem should fall. The sealing and rescuing of the elect Jews in Rev. 7 bears every trace of being the same great fact. Hence its location in time shortly preceded the fall of that city, and if the fulfillment precedes that fall, so and much more must the prophecy itself.

(4.) In the same general line of thought and of argument we have a remarkable coincidence between our Lord's prediction (Luke 21: 24), "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles;" and of the temple (Mat. 24: 2), "There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down;" and the prediction through the Revelator John (Rev. 11: 2), "The court that is outside the temple leave out, for it is given unto the Gentiles, and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty-two months." Both these predictions concur: (*a*) that Jerusalem was a doomed city; (*b*) that it should be trodden down by unhallowed Gentile feet [the Roman armies]; and (*c*) that even the presence of the holy temple within it should not shield it from this desolation. My argument as to the date of the Apocalypse turns on the strong presumption that this passage (Rev. 11: 2) synchronizes with Christ's pre-

diction of the fall of Jerusalem, and therefore proves that at the date of its writing, *the city had not yet fallen*.—Very strong to the same point is the statement in the same context (v. 13): “And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell”—which certainly assumes that the whole city had *not previously fallen*, but was standing. The date of its actual fall is well known, viz., A. D. 70. This prophecy was written, therefore, shortly before this fall.

(5.) The account given of the murder of the “two witnesses,” naming the very place where their dead bodies lay exposed and insulted (Rev. 11: 8)—“in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, *where also our [their] Lord was crucified*,” puts the finger of prophecy precisely upon Jerusalem, and obviously conceives of it as standing at the time of this vision, and indeed at the time when the murder of the two witnesses took place. This, taken in connection with the points made from chap. 7 and from chap. 11: 2, would certainly seem to fix the date of these events and of course the date of the book which predicts them, *before the destruction of Jerusalem*.

(6.) Rev. 17 is professedly an explanation of the more prominent symbols in the seven chapters (13–19), inasmuch as the angel said (v. 7), “I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, who hath the seven heads and ten horns.” In this explanation the woman is shown to be “that great city” (Rome) “which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (v. 18), and which “sat on seven hills” [mountains]. Specially to our purpose it is said, “There are seven kings (v. 10) of whom five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come.” Here the one that *is*, placed in a series with certain preceding ones fallen, and another following, “not yet come,” must beyond all reasonable question be the king then on the throne of Rome when this book was written. It is safe to affirm that John could not have given the date of his writing more precisely and conclusively than he has done here unless he had given the very name of Nero. But there were obvious reasons why it was not prudent to give his actual name. He meant however to describe him so that his readers need be in no doubt.—Now since the question of date is narrowed down to a choice between the reigns of Nero and of Domitian, it only remains to say that this dynasty of Roman kings [emperors] began unquestionably with Julius Cæsar, after whom we count Augustus,

Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, making the five who had fallen, and reach Nero, the sixth, of whom the angel then said, "*One is.*" Galba followed "to continue but a short space" (v. 10)—according to history, but seven months. The symbol and the angel's count had no occasion to carry the list of kings further. If carried on however and all counted in, Domitian would have been the twelfth. Of course the present tense of the book—the date of the vision—was not under Domitian, but was under Nero. But beyond all question in proof that Nero was the one head of the beast then in power when John wrote is the fact that he is absolutely identified by "the number of his name" (13: 18). See my notes on the passage.

(7.) There are at least two books in the New Testament (the Epistle to the Hebrews and 2 Peter) which are thought to contain allusions to the Apocalypse. If this shall appear, it will follow that the Apocalypse was in existence when these books were written. Let us then examine a single passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews (12: 22, 23).—On the point of motives to a holy life, the writer is contrasting the case of the Hebrews before Mt. Sinai with the case of the Hebrew Christians of his own day before the corresponding Mt. Zion. He says (v. 18), "Ye are not come unto that merely material, tangible mount [Sinai].....but ye are come unto [a spiritual] Mt. Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem"—[in Rev. 21: 2, "The holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven"]:—"And to an innumerable company of angels," [the reader may see them in Rev. 5: 11, 12, and 7: 11, 12]; "to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven" [see the writing of their names in the book of life, Rev. 21: 27, and 13: 8, and 20: 12]; "and to God the Judge of all" [Rev. 20: 11, 12]; "and to the spirits of just men made perfect" [who stand before us remarkably throughout this book of Revelation, *e. g.*, 5: 8-10, and 6: 9-11, and 7: 13-17, and 15: 2-4, and 21 and 22]. It seems to me highly probable, not to say almost certain, that the writer to the Hebrews had in his eye these salient points of the book of Revelation. These points are in his book for precisely the purpose which the writer to the Hebrews had before him, *viz.*: as constituting that magnificent and most impressive array of motives which under the gospel were brought to bear upon the Christian life, as compared with the corresponding motives arrayed before

the ancient Hebrew people even in those most impressive scenes at Mt. Sinai.—In his 2d Epistle (3: 10, 13) Peter makes two points which the reader will notice: (1) that “the heavens shall pass away” and “the earth be burnt up;” (2) that “we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” John has it (Rev. 20: 11) “The earth and the heavens fled away;” and (21: 1) “I saw a new heaven and a new earth, and the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.” The righteous only dwelt there (21: 27, and 22: 14). Here then we have both the fact of the passing away of this present earth and heavens, and the promise of the new. With a high degree of probability Peter had the Revelation of John before him and adopted its descriptive terms. But Peter fell a martyr under Nero’s persecution, and therefore wrote this epistle before Nero’s death. The date of the Epistle to the Hebrews is not known precisely, but no critics within my knowledge have placed it so late as the reign of Domitian.

2. It remains to speak of the *external* evidence—that of the early Christian fathers. This is far from being uniform, clear and direct. Unfortunately the earliest fathers (Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Papias, Polycarp and Justin Martyr)—the very men whose testimony would have been most valuable—fail us altogether. They either omitted all allusion to this point as being well enough understood without their testimony, or what they wrote has perished. The earliest of the fathers whose testimony has been relied on is Irenæus, who wrote his book “Against Heresies,” A. D. 175–180. His youth was spent in Asia Minor, but all his manhood and Christian work lay in Ancient Gaul [France]. From the dim light that reaches us it would seem that his statements as they were understood shaped the opinions of Eusebius and Jerome on this question, and that they naturally controlled the views of subsequent authors. Hence it becomes important to examine carefully what Irenæus said—the more so because it is at least supposable (I think even probable) that his testimony as to the date of the Apocalypse has been misunderstood.—The only passage appealed to as giving his testimony occurs in some remarks upon “the number of the beast” (Rev. 13: 18), which stand in our received text 666. The original Greek is this.*

* “Ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἀποκινδυνενομεν περὶ τοῦ ὀνομαστος τοῦ Ἀντιχριστοῦ ἀποφαινομενοι βεβαιοτικως, εἰ γὰρ εἴη ἀναφανθὼν τῷ γεν καιῶν κηρυττισθαι

It may be translated thus:—"Therefore we do not imperil [the churches] by announcing the name of the Antichrist plainly, for if it were safe and wise at the present time to proclaim his name, it would have been done by him who saw the visions of the Apocalypse, for it is not a very long time since he was still to be seen, but almost in our own age, near the close of the reign of Domitian." This passage has been generally understood to say that the vision of the Apocalypse was seen in the age of Domitian, and it seems to have been the standard authority for that opinion with the Christian authors of the third and fourth centuries and onward. His testimony turns on the single point whether in the last clause it is *he* (John) who was still *seen* among the churches in the age of Domitian, or *it* (the vision) which was then first seen. The logic of the passage, the course of thought, should be mainly relied on to decide this question.—I understand the logic of Irenæus thus:—Obviously it was not prudent to give Nero's name during his life. But John lived down to the time of Domitian when Nero was thirty years dead. So far forth therefore the circumstances had materially changed. Now, says Irenæus, if the necessity for divulging the real name of Nero is so great and the danger from doing it so small that we ought to have the name brought out *now*, then the same was true in the time of Domitian, and John would have disclosed the name himself. He did not do it, for though Nero was dead, yet Rome still lived, a persecuting power. The danger from Nero's personal vengeance was long since passed away, but other Neros might arise on the same Roman throne; therefore John remained silent: so let us. Hence the logic of the passage requires that the *thing seen* in the last clause of this passage should be *John* yet living in his extreme old age, and not the vision itself. The supposition that it was the *vision* nullifies the argument of the passage.—Or thus: The argument assumes that it would have been dangerous and therefore unwise to give Nero's name openly during his life; also, *that John lived a long time after Nero's death*, so that if it were proper to give Nero's name when Irenæus wrote, it was equally so in the last years of John, and he would have given the name to the churches then himself.—Origen seems to take the same view of the case, and per-

το ονομα αυτοῦ, δι' εκεινον αν ερρηθη τον και την Αποκαλυψιν ἑωρακοτος· ουδε γαρ προ πολλοῦ χρονου ἑωραθη, αλλα σχεδον επι τῆς ἡμετερας γενεας, προς τῷ τελει τῆς Δομετιανου αρχῆς."

haps the same view of this passage from Irenæus when he says, "The king of the Romans as tradition teaches condemned John to the Isle of Patmos for his testimony to the word of truth; and John taught many things about his testimony, yet did not say *who condemned him* in all that he has written in his Apocalypse." *— Several fathers of the third century and the fourth speak of John's writing this book in connection with his banishment to Patmos, which they locate in Domitian's reign. Yet some of them are not explicit as between Nero and Domitian. Clement of Alexandria says John was banished by "*the tyrant*"—a name appropriate enough to either, yet in usage applied less to Domitian and more to Nero.

A very ancient Latin fragment [quoted in Stuart's Apocalypse, I: 266] comes down to us, probably of the second century, saying, "Paul, following the order of his own predecessor John, wrote in the same way to only seven churches by name." This assumes that John wrote the Apocalypse before Paul wrote the last of his seven letters to as many churches by name. The latest date of Paul's seven was about A. D. 64. He died under Nero's persecution.—Eusebius [Bishop of Cesarea, A. D. 314–340] in his history (book 3; chap. 18, and bk. 5: 8) speaks of John as being banished to Patmos and of seeing his visions there *in the reign of DOMITIAN*, but quotes Irenæus (the very passage above cited) as his specific authority. Did he not misunderstand Irenæus?—He also refers to a current tradition to the same effect, which however may have grown out of mistaking the sense of Irenæus.—Jerome [born A. D. 331; died A. D. 420] held the same opinion, apparently on the authority of Irenæus as above and of Eusebius.—Victorinus of Petavio [died A. D. 303] in a Latin commentary on the Apocalypse, says that "John saw this vision while in Patmos, condemned to the mines by Domitian Caesar."—Many others of a later age might be cited to the same purport, witnessing however only to a current tradition which so far as appears may have come from the language of Irenæus, under a misunderstanding of his meaning.

On the other hand the Syriac translation of the Apocalypse has this superscription: "The Revelation which was made by God to John the Evangelist in the Island of Patmos to which he was

* See Stuart's Apocalypse, vol. 1, p. 271.

banished by Nero the Emperor." Most of the Syriac New Testament (known as the "Peshito"), *i. e.*, all the unquestioned books, are supposed to have been translated late in the first century or very early in the second; but the Syriac version of the Apocalypse is not so old. Yet Ephraim the Syrian of Nisibis [died A. D. 378] wrote commentaries on nearly the whole Bible; often appeals to the Apocalypse; but wrote only in Syriac and probably was unacquainted with Greek and therefore must have had this book in the Syriac tongue. This superscription seems to testify to a current tradition in Syria at least as far back as his day, assigning the date of the book to the age of Nero.—Of later witnesses, Andreas of Cappadocia [flourished about A. D. 500], in a commentary on this book, favors the Neronian date. Arethas also, his successor [about A. D. 540], yet more decisively. He assumes the book to have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem, for he explains chapters 6 and 7 as predictions of that event.—Plainly then the traditions of the early ages and the testimony of the fathers were not all in favor of the Domitian date.—Some incidental circumstances strongly favor the earlier date; *e. g.*, the account given in much detail by Eusebius [Ec. His. 3: 23], who quotes Clement to the effect that John after his return from this banishment in Patmos, mounted his horse and pushed away into the fastnesses of the mountains to reach a robber chief who had apostatized from the Christian faith. But Jerome represents John in the last years of his life (*i. e.*, at the time of Domitian's persecution) as being so weak and infirm that he was carried by other hands with difficulty to his church-meetings to say in tremulous tones: "My little children, love one another."—These traditions of the aged apostle, compared with each other and with the probabilities of the case, seem to forbid us to assign the date of the Apocalypse to the reign of Domitian.

The conclusion to which I am brought after much investigation is that the historic testimony for the Domitian date is largely founded on a misconception of the passage from Ireneus, and as a whole is by no means so harmonious, so ancient, and so decisive, as to overrule and set aside the strong internal evidence for the earlier date. I am compelled to accept the age of Nero as the true date of this writing.

III. *Of the TIMES under which the book was written.*

Here the important facts naturally fall under three heads. The first should present the personal circumstances of the writer and of his first readers whom he primarily addressed. Of this perhaps enough has been said in the opening pages of this Introduction, the great central fact lying out upon the face of the whole book, indicating the writer to be in banishment and his readers in peril and fierce temptation in the presence of impending persecution. —Then (2.) we should recall to mind the condition of the Jewish people and nation; and (3.) in like manner the state of Rome, both these nations being before us in this book as great persecuting powers, incurring the retributive vengeance of the Almighty and about to feel its fearful visitations.—(2.) As to the Jews many of my readers will scarcely need to be reminded that while a few of the nation had received Jesus of Nazareth, the great majority had scornfully rejected him; that spiritually, these masses were fearfully apostate from God; that morally, society was rotten to the core; that the high priest's office was bought and sold for money, and sometimes seized and held by an armed force of bandits and assassins; that their bitter hostility to Jesus passed over after his death upon his followers with augmented virulence; that the stoning of Stephen, the murder of James, the incessant persecutions of Paul, the instigation of the Roman civil magistrates in cities where they had no civil power in their own hands, combine to evince their implacable hostility against Christ and all his faithful servants;—in short, that the measure of their iniquity was now full; the day of hope and mercy, though long protracted, was now about to close, and “the hour of her judgment had come.” Through the lips of her national Council, as well as by the voice of her populace, she had demanded the crucifixion of the Son of God, and had cried, “His blood be on us and on our children!” The imprecation had been heard, the challenge accepted; and now upon the children of those who shouted, “Crucify him!” his blood was indeed about to come in appalling retribution! That fearful doom of which Moses had forewarned them (Lev. 26: 14-43, and Deut. 28: 15-68); that doom which wrung tears from the greater “Man of Sorrows” as he beheld the city and recalled the murder of so many generations of prophets and righteous men within her walls (Mat. 23: 34-39); that ruin which Jesus so definitely foretold as destined to bury her proud city in ruins and

leave not one stone upon another of her glorious temple;—*that* doom was now waiting only for its last signal to burst forth upon her. The vials of the wrath of God were in readiness for his angels of death, and Prophecy at so late an hour could scarcely think of forewarning the doomed. It seemed to have no other mission save to comfort the people of God and assure them that the Lord was about to smite the hopelessly hardened and guilty Jews “because his mercy endureth forever.”—The heavens were black with these storm-clouds of the wrath of God while John lay in Patmos. His prophetic eye was opened and uplifted to the visions thereof as seal after seal was broken, and trump after trump rung out its blast of impending doom.—Such on the Jewish side were the salient features of the times when this book was written.

(3.) To the student of ancient history, if moderately well read, the Rome of Nero's time is familiar. Eight centuries of war and conquest had filled Italy with enslaved captives, Rome with the spoil and plunder of the civilized world and its consequent enervation and vices, and her throne with a succession of emperors whose crimes and misrule beggar description. The reaction and debasement of ages of oppression were upon her, and her turn had come to be herself scourged with War's desolations.—Rome, moreover, was radically and intensely *idolatrous*. Reverence for her gods had been studiously engrafted into her civil institutions and made one of the main pillars of her political system. To fill up the cup of her abominations, the emperors in the dynasty of the Cæsars had exalted themselves to the rank of gods, and demanded of their people divine honors. It was to such a people that Paul set forth with trenchant power the sin of idolatry—its war against the light of nature and the law of conscience, and its natural and inevitable debasement of morals and of all society. The first two chapters of his Epistle to the Romans were meant primarily for the Rome of the age of Nero.—Yet the case of Rome differed in some points from that of Jerusalem; mainly in the fact that she had sinned against less light. To this it was due that the hour of her final ruin was more remote. The forbearance of God had yet more time to run. Her case had its remarkable parallel in ancient Babylon. Alike, each had been the great oppressing power of contemporary nations—as to God's people, each had been first the scourge in God's hand against them, and then was to be herself scourged for her oppressions; but especially were

they alike in the manner in which prophecy made the predicted future judgments upon each, minister to the comfort of God's suffering people, and witness to the righteous retribution which he will surely visit upon the nations that array themselves against his Zion. Moreover, God's predicted judgments on Babylon filled out ages of history in their completion; and the same is true of his judgments on the second great Babylon—Pagan Rome.—Coming back now to a nearer and closer view of the Rome of the Apocalypse, we have Nero—another name for tyranny and crime. Gibbon sets him forth in moderate terms as “profligate and cruel,” and adds of him and the other emperors of his age, “They are condemned to everlasting infamy.” History recites his unnatural murders—of mother, brothers, wives; states that a fearful conflagration of nine days' continuance having destroyed the greater part of Rome, and it being generally believed that the fire was kindled by his order, Nero, to silence this report, charged the act upon the Christians, and thus excited against them a most barbarous, implacable, and universal persecution. Wild beasts, crucifixion, and fire in its most torturing forms, were the common instruments of suffering and death.—There seems to be no reason to doubt that this persecution extended to other portions of the empire. The known will of the sovereign would at least give the license, and human depravity would supply the malice requisite to violence and blood.—Thus the old idolatrous harlot—“mother of abominations”—made herself drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus; and now the time draws on for God to “give her blood to drink without measure.” The hour of her judgment is near at hand;—prophetic vision paints for us its glowing and terrible outlines.—Such, then, in respect to the Rome of that age were the *times* in which the visions of the Apocalypse were shown and recorded.

IV. *To whom precisely was this book primarily addressed and therefore specially adapted? and what was its great moral purpose?*

This question has vastly important bearings upon the true interpretation of the book. One of the first conditions precedent to the true interpretation of any written document is to ascertain *for whom* it was written, and what their circumstances and wants were, that so we may master the special aim and purpose of the

writer. When we have the people before us for whose special benefit he wrote, and when we have reason to believe that the writer knew their case well, wrote to be understood by them, and therefore adapted himself to their capacities and to their circumstances, we begin to feel ourselves on solid ground as to a fair comprehension of what he wrote and of its just interpretation. Thus, *e. g.*, the interpreter of the Epistle to the Romans finds it exceedingly useful to consider that the people primarily addressed were mostly Jews resident in Rome—the same class with whom (Acts 28: 23) Paul “reasoned out of their own scriptures from morning to evening.” So also the epistles to the church at Corinth are set in full sunlight only when you study Corinth itself—its philosophical culture, the national pride therein, and its dissolute morals, coupled also with the special purposes which the letters themselves clearly indicate. So in the book before us, we must know to whom it was primarily addressed and for whom therefore it was specially adapted.—On this point the notion has been somewhat common that although the second and third chapters were addressed specifically to the seven churches of Asia, therein named, yet this was true of those chapters only,—the rest of the book having no specific address—no special adaptation to any body of people well defined either in place or time. It has been loosely supposed to belong rather to the world at large and indefinitely; somewhat to the age now passing, and much of it yet more definitely to the ages yet to come. It is claimed by those who take this view that prophecy was *not* written to be understood by its first readers. God expected it would be and meant it should be in the main unintelligible to them, and indeed that it should never admit of a just and real *interpretation* until its fulfillment should bring out its meaning. Some of this class of interpreters of prophecy seem to think it a most sublime idea that God should throw out prophecies of the distant and magnificent future, and then wait in the majesty and dignity of an inscrutable Being till remote ages should come up with their revealing light and give mankind their first just ideas of its meaning.—An exhaustive discussion of this theory of prophecy would detain me too long and turn me aside too much from my present special work. I must pass it therefore with suggesting three serious and indeed fatal objections against it.

(1.) In just so far as this theory makes the true sense of proph-

they depend upon the fulfilling event and not upon the revealing words, it strikes at the very nature of prophecy—which surely claims to predict future events in language which reveals what the event shall be before the event is. This element being abstracted, written prophecy becomes in itself no prediction of things future, for the things future must needs reveal themselves and so give their first intelligible sense to the so-called prophetic words.

—This theory pushed as far as some would push it brings the predictions of the Bible upon substantially the same basis as the ambiguous sayings of the ancient Delphic oracle to Cræsus: “Crossing the great river you destroy a great nation;”—the event alone determining whether the “great nation” would be his own or his enemy’s. Whatever tends to degrade the prophecies of the Bible to this low form is to be not only deplored but reprobated.—To prevent a possible misunderstanding of my position, let me say (*a.*) That a morally right heart, docile and unprejudiced, is naturally prerequisite to the understanding of prophecy, as it is also of any and every word of God: (*b.*) That usually the points which God makes in prophecy are rather general than particular. Prophecy is intelligible when so put that we can get substantially the truth which God meant to reveal. (*c.*) Other things being equal, nearer events will be more easily and perfectly understood than more remote, because men more perfectly understand the attendant circumstances.

(2.) This theory in its application to the book before us is fatally confronted by the manifold indications of a definite moral purpose and aim, of such sort as presupposes that the predictions are intelligible and are in fact mainly understood. This is pre-eminently true in this book of Revelation. There is no book in all the Bible which bears more obvious and certain marks of a definite and strong moral purpose, indicating every-where that the things said were designed to be understood and to have an immediate and powerful moral influence on their first readers.—Can it be necessary to argue this point? Surely nothing can be more absurd than the theory that God sent to the seven churches of Asia a series of predictions for the solemn purpose of girding their souls to “endure a great fight of afflictions,” but yet with design made these predictions unintelligible—*i. e.*, as to them utterly unmeaning? Will it be assumed that God expected to move the minds of men in that way?

(3.) This theory that prophecy is usually unintelligible until the event reveals its meaning is squarely confronted *by the facts of the case*. Did not the Jewish scribes learn from prophecy *where* Christ should be born? (Mat. 2: 4-6). Did not the disciples understand Christ's prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem and the immediate sign of that fall (Luke 21: 20, 21) and so escape from Jerusalem to Pella—the "mountains" across the Jordan? Did they kill the sense of that prophecy by mystifying the word "Jerusalem" as many critics mystify the literal landmarks which appear in the Apocalypse? And is it not the fact that the Messianic prophecies in general were very fairly interpreted by the Jews long before Christ came, as appears in the Septuagint translation and in the Chaldee Targums?

It is therefore both pertinent and important to inquire, *Who were those first readers to whom the book was definitely addressed and to whose case it was consequently adapted?*—Fortunately we have the best possible evidence on this point—the author's own announcement in the opening of the book—"John to the seven churches of Asia" (1: 4); "I John, your brother and companion in tribulation, was in Patmos . . . and being in the spirit on the Lord's day, I heard behind me a great voice, saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia," etc. (1: 9-11).—But the objector will claim that this refers exclusively and solely to chapters second and third, and has no reference to the remaining chapters which are the great body of the book.—To which I answer, That is bald assumption, and what is more, is an assumption squarely in the face of the testimony of the book itself. For surely the author and the inditing spirit ought to be allowed to *give the address* of the book, *i. e.*, to say to whom it was in fact addressed. The proper place to say this is in the opening of the book, and again perhaps at its close. Precisely in these places do we find his testimony to this point. The opening testimony I have cited. The closing testimony is of the same purport: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things *in the churches*." "The Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants *the things which must shortly be done*" (22: 16, 6). Therefore these "churches," these "servants" were then living, *i. e.*, they were *the churches of Asia Minor*.—But although this testimony alone is amply sufficient, yet more can be adduced. I call the reader's

attention to the fact that the special messages to the seven churches as they stand in chapters 2 and 3 are not isolated and disconnected from the rest of the book, but are interlaced in the strongest way, both with chapter 1 which precedes, and with the chapters that come after, especially chapters 19-22. Let us see.

—In the face and the fear of persecution unto blood, a time of stern trial came upon all those churches of Asia. They were not in all respects ready to meet this trial and stand up with steady faith and unflinching soul for Jesus. What must be done for them? what considerations must be brought before them to gird them for endurance unto victory?—First, the great Alpha and Omega, their glorified Lord and Savior, appears in surpassing majesty to John (1: 12-20). But let it be distinctly noted: this transcendently glorious manifestation of Christ was not made solely or even mainly for the sake of its impression upon John alone. A more important purpose was to impress the seven churches with the special presence, the searching eye, the limitless power, the ineffable glory and majesty of their own professed Lord and Master. Mark how this is done. Not only does John describe this impressive manifestation in words of unrivaled force, and send the description entire to them all, but he takes up and distributes it in separate parts, applying them to set forth that all-glorious Personage who sends them their respective messages. To Ephesus: "These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks"—as you may see in chap. 1: 12, 13, 20.—To the church of Smyrna speaketh he "who is the first and the last, who was dead and is alive"—points which appear in 1: 11, 17, 18.—To Pergamos thus saith he who "hath the sharp sword with two edges," as said (1: 16): "Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword."—To Thyatira speaketh "the Son of God who hath eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass"—those same words of thrilling power which you may read in 1: 14, 15.—So to Sardis he defines himself as "having the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars" (1: 4, 16); to Philadelphia, as "he that is holy and true, he that hath the key of David," etc. (see 1: 5, 18); and to Laodicea, as "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (1: 5).—Thus it is shown impressively that the same glorious Personage at whose feet John fell as one dead was precisely the author of these mes-

sages to the seven churches. He would have them know *whose* voice spake these words; *whose* eye was searching every heart; *whose* glorious presence was surely there, walking up and down among those churches.

In a manner precisely analogous to these opening addresses, each several letter closes with a blessing promised to "him that overcometh." In the letter to Ephesus (2: 7) the promise is, "I will give him to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." But what "tree of life" is this? How came it to be assumed that the brethren at Ephesus would know any thing about this tree of life if no other part of this book were written for them and to them, save the first seven verses of chap. 2? This assumption must be a mistake; the "tree" referred to is the one described in chap. 22: 2, and John intended the last chapter of the book for the reading of the church at Ephesus as really as the first two.—So in the letter to Sardis: "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Where are they expected to learn of this "second death?" The answer is, in 20: 14 and 21: 8, not to speak of many other passages in the last four chapters.—To the victorious ones of Pergamos the promise runs, "I will give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it." But these words would quite fail of expressing their full meaning unless the brethren of Pergamos were to *read through the whole book*, and see especially what is said (19: 12) of the Great Conquering Chief: "On his head were many crowns, and he had a name written which no man knew but he himself;" and also the numerous allusions to the opposite party—the enemies of Jesus—who "bore the mark of the beast in their right hand and in their forehead," as may be seen (13: 16, 17, and 14: 9, and 15: 2, and 16: 2, and 19: 26).—In like manner the victor in Sardis shall be clothed in white and his name not blotted from the book of life, the glory of which promise the brethren in Sardis were expected to see when they read the thrilling account thereof in chaps. 19: 7-9, 14, and 20: 12; and indeed in all these last chapters of the book.—So the promise to the overcoming ones of Philadelphia carries the mind to the New Jerusalem of which they might read in the last two chapters.—In this remarkable manner did the voice of Jesus, dictating to John both these seven letters to as many churches and

the remaining contents of this book, tie all the parts together, interlacing them as I have said, as if he foresaw the violence that in future times would be used to tear them asunder! What more could he have done to prove to us that the whole book was intended primarily for those seven churches—every word of it sent to them to be read, pondered, and understood by themselves, that they might receive its full moral impression, both the full force of all its threatened judgments upon their persecutors, and also the full force of all its inspirations of hope and promise to “him that overcometh?”—A careful examination of the whole book will show that all the intermediate chapters (4-18) are naturally adapted to meet the great moral wants of those churches; had a vital bearing toward this end, to gird every wavering heart with strength unto patient endurance and unflinching fidelity for Christ.—Nothing more seems necessary to complete this argument and bring it up to demonstration save to adduce the reiterated declarations of the book itself that the events which it predicted *were then* “near at hand.” See 1: 1: “Must shortly come to pass;” and 1: 3, “For the time is at hand;” and 22: 6, “To show unto his servants the things that must shortly be done;” and 22: 10, “Seal not up the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.” Consequently the first readers of this book would know that they must look for these predicted events (at least the greater part of them) very soon, within their own age. Those fearful judgments on Christ’s enemies they could not fail to interpret rightly, for they were already so near as to “cast their shadows before.”

In concluding this topic let me again remind the reader of the point of my argument, viz.: that a book addressed to certain specified churches then under the sternest trial, to be read by them for their spiritual good, *was certainly made in the main intelligible—must have been adapted to their understanding in both the judgments it threatened and the blessings it promised.* The judgments threatened were not to them *unmeaning*; the enemies threatened were not to them *unknown*. The blessings promised were to be measured and appreciated in the light of those judgments. In respect to both the judgments and the blessings we must assume that they had the keenest personal interest, and therefore this entire book must have thrilled their souls with its utmost measure of inspiring power.

V. Let us consider various indications in the book which *locate* its predicted events in *place* or in *time*, and thus become *landmarks* to determine its interpretation.—I assume that my readers will appreciate the importance of studying this point faithfully and discreetly. The *visions* proper of this book are almost exclusively a series of symbolic pictures—a grand panorama, painting scenes of prophetic import to the eye in gorgeous colors and majestic outlines. Now we wish to know what these pictures mean. I am to inquire at this point whether this writing gives us any plain unsymbolic hints as to the *place* and the *time* of these future events which the visions prophetically portray. Has the revealing Agent anywhere dropped, though but for a moment, his symbolic speech and given us literal unsymbolic words which mean just what they say—which were designed apparently to *explain* the symbols and *locate the events*, and which therefore may be relied on for this purpose?—We shall find a few—perhaps enough for our purpose. It is our wisdom to use them to the full extent of their legitimate aid.—One appears in 11: 8, in which, speaking of the place where the two witnesses lay murdered and unburied, the angel says, “Their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, *where also our Lord was crucified.*” Beyond all rational doubt, this was designed to give the literal and precise location of that event. This great city in reference to its spiritual character was a second Sodom (see Isa. 1: 9, 10) in the twofold sense of guilt and doom. But dropping all figure, the place may be known through all the ages as that where the Lord was crucified. There never was or could be but one city that answers to this fact of history. The angel appends a literal statement to his figurative description in order to tell us precisely the *place*.—The better reading of this remarkable clause is not “*our*” Lord but *their* Lord—the exact sense being, where their Lord also as well as themselves was murdered.—This landmark shows us therefore *where* to look for the two witnesses—*where* their testimony was given, and *where* their martyred bodies fell. The fact stated in v. 13, that “one-tenth part of the city fell,” locates these events *in time* to some point *before* the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, A. D. 70.—The allusions (11: 2) to the court of the temple and to the holy city as “given up to the Gentiles to be trodden under foot by them,” become a very decisive landmark when we take

into view their connection with v. 8 and v. 13 as above explained, and also the obviously parallel prophecy recorded by Luke (21 : 24), "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles." This chapter (Rev. 11) treats therefore of Jerusalem—the persecution which she brought upon Christ's faithful witnesses, and the fearful doom which God brought upon her for her sins. If on a careful examination of chaps. 6-9 it shall appear (as most critics have thought) that chap. 11 gives us the final catastrophe, and those chapters (6-9) the antecedent, foreshadowing and premonitory notes of coming doom, then so much of the predicted events of this book would seem to be definitely located in both *place* and *time*, and of course, we may add, *in history*. These points must be carefully examined when those chapters come under consideration.

Under our present head chap. 17 is specially important because it is declared to be an explanation of the meaning of certain leading symbols in chaps. 13-19. The writer says (v. 1), "An angel came and talked with me, saying, 'Come hither; I will show thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters;'" and yet more definitely (v. 7), "Why dost thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns." These are the very things that John wanted to know; which he needed to tell his original readers that they might know; and which we may well rejoice to learn, for they give us the clew to all these related chapters (13-19). His explanation (briefly stated) shows that the woman is that "great city" of which two descriptive facts are given: (a.) She "reigneth over the kings of the earth" (v. 18); (b.) She sitteth on seven mountains—*i. e.*, is a city built on seven hills. All students of Roman history will recognize the Rome of that age as this city, and consequently as being in symbol this woman—the great harlot. No other city approaches this description. Every element given fits her perfectly; and what is yet more, they are the great historic and geographic facts which most comprehensively and precisely describe the Rome of that age. She was built on seven hills; she was mistress of the civilized world, reigning over the kings of the earth.—In its place I may notice two other corroborating features of her history:—her bloody persecution of the saints, and her harlotry (idolatry). Apart from these however, the woman is located—her name is virtually revealed. We know who she is. So much then is solid ground—a

fixed landmark.—But as yet we lack the historic *date*—the *time when*. Will the explaining angel give this?—Note what he says of the succession of her kings (v. 10): “There are seven kings; five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh he must continue a short space.” Now if we take this as an explanation of the seven symbolic heads of the beast (as we must), we are shut up to the literal and most obvious sense—a succession of five kings already fallen; a sixth then reigning; a seventh soon to rise, but for only a short reign.—Now having the date of the vision, we know that the king then reigning was Nero. Nero then is a specimen of the seven, and we must go back to the rise of his dynasty and begin our count there—*i. e.*, with Julius Cæsar. Beginning with him, Nero is precisely the sixth; the seventh—a short reign according to the prophecy—was Galba, who reigned seven months. Here then we have this series of prophetic events located in *place*—old Rome; and in *time*—upon Nero’s reign. This is another great landmark. No interpretation of this book can possibly be the true one which disregards these landmarks and fails to adjust itself to their demands. The points that are fixed in chap. 11 and in chap. 17 avail to prove beyond all rational doubt that in this book of Revelation we have two great persecuting powers, depicted, threatened, judged and destroyed, each represented by its great city—Jerusalem, Rome: Jerusalem, involving the Jewish people and Judaism as a persecuting power; Rome, involving that pagan, idolatrous, persecuting power. Whether we have other persecuting powers in this book will be a subject of future inquiry. These two we certainly have; for these literal statements, so obviously made for the very purpose of explaining what would otherwise be dark, uncertain prophetic symbols, must be held to be absolutely decisive. If we can not or will not accept God’s own explanations, it is vain for us to expound, dreaming that we have mastered the problems of the book.

VI. The *sources* of the writer’s figurative imagery, and the *bearing* of these sources upon his use of them in this book.*

* It is only to avoid circumlocution that I speak of John as the writer of this book and also as himself determining its style, figures of speech, etc., while I hold most fully that the Spirit of inspiration spake many of these words to John and showed him these symbols, either in vision or by a revealing angel.

See a fuller note on this subject, p. 7.

Upon the first point there would seem to be no room for doubt. These sources were the Old Testament prophets. There John found his symbols and figures; thence he took them. The four *living ones* of chaps. 4-6 [very improperly translated "beasts"] are from Ezek. 1, with some shadings from Isa. 6. The books of prophetic destiny, both that of chaps. 5 and 6, with its seven seals and the "little book" of chapter 10, are from Ezek. 2 and 3, even to the special feature of eating it and its sweetness in the mouth. The diverse colored horses of Rev. 6 come from Zech. 1 and 6. The sealing of one hundred and forty-four thousand men in their foreheads is from Ezek. 8 and 9. The great dragon [serpent] of Rev. 12 was first named in the story of the fall (Gen. 3). The "beasts" of chap. 13 and onward have their prototypes in Dan. 7 and 8. The vials of chaps. 15 and 16 come from the "cup of God's indignation" which appears so often in the old Hebrew prophets, especially in Jeremiah. (See Jer. 25: 15-28.) Of course the Babylon of Rev. 18 looks back to that old Babylon whose fall Isaiah and Jeremiah so abundantly predicted. The sketching in chap. 18 comes largely from Ezekiel's picture of the fall of Tyre (chaps. 26-28).—These cases may at least serve as specimens.

On the question whether John used these symbols in the same sense in which he found them used by the old prophets, the presumption is strong that he did. This would unquestionably be the natural course of his mind. Any wide, violent divergence from this rule is exceedingly improbable. In general their sense where John found them should be assumed to be their sense as he used them. Special circumstances may demand a slight modification, but ordinarily nothing more.

VII. It remains to speak of *the principles or laws which must control the interpretation of this book.*

Need I here solicit the reader's careful attention? I will only premise that if any certainty is ever to be attained in respect to the meaning of this book, it must be reached by first determining its just principles of interpretation.—The following principles and rules I propose to follow myself. I commend them to the good sense of my readers:

1. *We must come to this book to learn what it teaches; not to make it teach what we will.* That is, we must rule out of the mind all preconceived theories, and bring to its study a mind open to the

very impressions which the book itself, diligently studied in the light of all its known circumstances, shall legitimately make.

2. We must interpret the predictions in harmony with God's own declarations as to the *time* of their fulfillment. If God has himself indicated whether this time be near or remote, why should we not accept his indications in their obvious sense, and interpret accordingly? How can we hope to reach the truth if we will not receive God's own teaching and guidance?—Now the fact is that precisely in those parts of the book where we should look for these indications, we find them, viz., *at the opening of the book*, to give us the right clue at the outset and prevent us from being led off on some false track; and again, *near its close*, to remind us that we must not transcend these heaven-sent limitations in the range we may take to find the leading events therein predicted. —The words in which God defines the time of these predicted events are these: "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him to show unto his servants *things which must shortly come to pass*" (1: 1): "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy . . . *for the time is at hand*" (1: 3). "Write the things which thou hast seen and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (1: 19)—but this "*hereafter*" is not the remote, indefinite future, but according to the original ["*meta tauta*"] the things which follow *closely after*, in the closest connection with present events. The same language and in the same sense appears (4: 1); "Come up hither" [into this opened heaven] "and I will show thee things that must be *hereafter*," *i. e.*, in close connection with the present; things which must be *very soon*. Such are the declarations as to the *time of fulfillment*, in the very opening of these visions. Are they not perfectly definite and decisive?—Near the close we read (22: 6), "These sayings are faithful and true, and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants *the things which must shortly be done*." Also (22: 10) "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; *for the time is at hand*." Daniel was directed (8: 26, and 12: 4, 9) to "shut up the words" and "seal the book" because the events predicted lay somewhat remotely in the future, *i. e.*, they referred to the age of the Maccabees and of the Syrian wars, then three hundred and sixty years distant. With this case John's prophecies are contrasted and he is told *not* to seal and shut up his prophetic words because the time of their

fulfillment was then near at hand.—Such are the indications kindly given by God himself in regard to the *time of fulfillment* of the great facts revealed in this book. Inasmuch as they speak in general of the things predicted with no limitation to a *few* of these things or to any defined *part* of them, we are manifestly bound to apply them to the great body of these predictions. This is the only method of fair dealing with the divine words.—Yet let me anticipate the examination of chapters 19–22 so far as to say that they seem obviously to refer to the final triumph of the gospel in our world; to the scenes of the last judgment; and (probably) of the future heavenly state. The laws of mental association by which these events are linked with the fall of Jerusalem and the judgments of God upon Rome I shall have occasion to consider fully in their place. They constitute a very easy and natural exception to the statements we have been considering, which assume that the main events foretold in the book were then near at hand. Those main events we shall see refer to *Jerusalem* and to *Rome*—the great persecuting powers then actively hunting down and murdering the saints. They constitute the staple facts of this book of prophecy and therefore are fitly embraced in the comprehensive statement, “*near at hand.*”——I am well aware that many critics have disposed of this testimony from God himself, as to the speedy fulfillment of these prophecies, in a very short-hand way. One of the reviewers of Prof. Stuart wrote;—“Nor would we contract the mind of God to the narrow dimensions of the generation when John wrote.” “Nor does it move us that at the opening of his book, he says;—‘The time is at hand.’ He was then judging from God’s point of vision, with whom a thousand years are as one day; he was judging on the scale of eternity.”*——But if God had occasion to say certain things to the churches of Asia of “the generation when John wrote,” and undertook to do it, who shall forbid him? Who has any right to insinuate that such messages would dishonorably belittle or contract the mind of God? And when the revealing angel said—“The time is at hand,” how does this critic know that “he was judging from God’s point of vision with whom one thousand years are as one day?” If he meant so, why did he not say so? If he has not said so, what right has any critic to wrest his words from their natural sense and put upon

* See Bibliotheca Sacra, April, 1817; p. 302.

them a construction altogether his own and in the face of their plain, obvious meaning? If critics may use such liberties with God's own words, making his declarations—"The time is at hand;" "shortly come to pass"—mean the very reverse of what they say, what may they not do? And how can God reveal any thing to us so that we can surely know what he means? If God does not use the language of men as men ordinarily use it, there is an end of all reliable interpretation of his words. If when he says "day" he may mean a thousand years and yet give us no hint of any other sense than we give to the word "day," then there is no such thing as a trustworthy *revelation* from God to man.—For myself I must take it for granted that when God introduced this book of prophecy to the seven churches of Asia, saying that the time of fulfilling its predicted events was then near at hand, he meant just what he said—meant to have them expect the great body of those events very soon and be looking for them in their own times. For if he had meant precisely this, he could not have said it in any other words more direct and plain than these.

Many critics have said—This book gives a prophetic series of historic events, running on two thousand years or more, and that when God said, "These things must come to pass *shortly*," he meant only that the series would *begin* shortly, while the great mass of its events would lie far down in the future centuries. But this seems to me to be, not accepting God's words at their obvious value, but forcing a sense upon them to suit the exigencies of the critic's own theory. If God had really meant what these critics claim, why did he not say it? Could he possibly suppose that the words he did use would be understood by the seven churches as these critics interpret them? And did he use words which he knew would convey a sense quite different from the truth?

3. We are bound to interpret this book *in harmony with God's own interpretation of its symbols*.—Such professed explanations are much less numerous and full in this book of prophecy than in Daniel. Let us the more carefully use what we have.—The greater part of chap. 17, is such explanation. It shows us definitely *who* is meant by "the woman," "the great harlot."—The seven heads of the beast are explained to have a twofold reference; (1.) To "the seven mountains on which the woman sitteth;" (2.) To the seven kings who reigned in succession, the sixth being then on the throne. This is not the place to expound in full the points

made in this chapter. Suffice it to say that as humble pupils of prophecy, sitting at the feet of our Great Teacher, we shall surely seize with promptness and ponder with diligence whatever explanations he may be pleased to give us of the meaning of his own symbols. Such explanations should be permitted to throw their influence over all other points, not explained, which are of the same general character. The whole prophecy to which the woman and the seven-headed beast belong must surely be interpreted in harmony with God's explanation of these leading characters and agents therein.

4. We must interpret *in harmony with whatever allusions the book contains to known historic events and localities.* We have such allusions in chaps. 11 and 17.—In chap. 11: 1, 2, we have the temple, the altar, the outer court, and the giving of it up to the Gentiles to be trodden under foot of them; and in v. 8 we have another most specific and unquestionable reference to Jerusalem—the very place “where the Lord was crucified,” and where his two witnesses fell and lay unburied; and in v. 13 it is said that “in the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth part of the city (this same Jerusalem) fell,” etc. Now here are various allusions to historic places and objects with which John's readers were somewhat acquainted and with which we are familiar. There can be no doubt how *they* would understand these words. Of all the men who were ever to read this book, they were best situated to understand it. The sense most obvious to them is doubtless the true one. It would be only a great folly therefore for us to ignore such historic references, and make up an interpretation of this eleventh chapter and of the stupendous events which reach their consummation here, just as if the prophet had given us in these allusions no clew to his meaning. It would be unpardonable to fritter away the meaning of these allusions and rob ourselves of their aid by forcing upon them a fanciful meaning. They are plainly literal expressions thrown into the midst of a delineation which is mostly figurative and symbolic; and therefore we may assume that they were intended to be landmarks to guide the reader through the entire series of symbols which culminate here. They put their prophetic finger on Jerusalem as the doomed city; on its corrupt Judaism, its apostate priests and people, as the sworn and long time maddened enemies of Christ and of his true Zion—now about to be overwhelmed under the bolts of Jehovah's thunder.—In

like manner the angel-interpreter appears in chap. 17, avowedly to "show the judgment of the great harlot" (v. 1), and "to tell the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns" (v. 7). This woman and this beast are the prominent personages throughout chaps. 13-18. Here the revealing angel comes to identify the city of old Rome as represented by this woman, and the seven kings that successively filled her throne as the seven heads of the "beast that carried her." When he gives plain explanations of the great prophetic symbols of the book, saying, "The woman whom thou sawest is the great city," etc., and "The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth," and also "the seven kings, of whom five are fallen," etc., why shall we not hail this explanation with joy and thankfulness, accepting it as indeed a light shining in an otherwise dark place, and a landmark to guide our otherwise dubious way? On what ground can we expect to reach the true sense of this book if we thrust away the heaven-sent teacher who comes "to tell us the mystery" of these symbols?

5. We must interpret in harmony with whatever indications the book itself may give us showing that Christians then living were to be the persecuted men of whom these visions speak and whose martyrdom they assume; and that their own persecutors were the men about to be visited with desolating judgments. Such indications appear in the account given of the opening of the fifth seal (6: 9-11): "When he had opened the fifth seal I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which 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 them that dwell on the earth?*" "Dwell on the earth," be it noticed, testifies that those persecutors were then alive—*then*, at the time of the vision and of this prayer—pursuing their diabolic mission, for the prayer of the fallen martyrs cries, "How long, O Lord, wilt thou not avenge our blood on them," and put an end to their murder of our surviving brethren?—The record proceeds to say, "And white robes were given to every one of them, and it was said to them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they had been, should be fulfilled." The white robes, significant of ultimate

victory to their cause, were for their comfort and consolation, yet they must needs be told that more of their brethren were yet to fall martyrs for a season longer; then the vials of God's wrath would be poured out on those guilty murderers. To see this argument in its proper strength, it should be borne in mind that the sense most obvious and natural to the first readers of the book is the true one; that although modern critics may overlook or ignore the explicit declarations with which the book opens—"things that must shortly come to pass;" "the time is at hand;" or (4: 1) "things which must be" [immediately] "hereafter;" it is simply impossible that John's first readers could forget or overlook these statements, for they served to make these prophecies matters of immediate, personal and most vital interest. Consequently those first readers must have made the present tense of this vision ["that *dwell* on the earth"] their own present time—*now dwelling* on the earth while we are reading this book—and would apply what is said of the persecutors to the very men who had just been murdering their own brethren—*e. g.*, Antipas of Pergamos, "slain among you" (2: 13). Hence my argument is that, this being the construction which they must needs give to these words, it is the true one and we must adopt it. Therefore to apply these words in their primary and proper sense to the Waldenses and Albigenses of the middle ages seems to me like mere dreaming—or rather like steering one's ship in mid-ocean by defacing the log-book, throwing overboard the compass, and blotting out the stars!

6. If the prophetic symbols indicate fearful judgments on some great persecuting power without naming or particularly describing this power, we are bound to assume that such naming and description are omitted because John's first readers would know without its name what power was meant. This rule rests on the simple principle that every sensible man writes so as to be understood by those whom he addresses. Of course he writes for an object. John wrote for a great moral object; wrote to do good to the churches of Asia. Therefore he wrote in such a way that they could readily understand of whom he spoke. If he omitted to name the wicked men then about to be judged and destroyed for their violence against Christ's people, it was because he saw that his readers would know without his naming them. In this case they could not fail to assume that those persecutors were the men under whom their own brethren were dying; the martyrs

alluded to were of themselves.—The reader will notice the remarkable fact that the successive seals (chaps. 6 and 8) and the successive trumpets also (chap. 9) reveal plagues, yet without definitely naming the parties on whom those plagues were to fall. Except the intimations given (6: 9-11) in the cry of the martyred souls seen under the altar, and in the nationality of the sealed ones (chap. 7), we have nothing thus far in the book to define the doomed nation or people. Chap. 11 does give us some definite *localities*, and also some landmarks as to *time*. But through several chapters we fail to find such indications. The rule now under consideration requires us to find the persecuting powers here foredoomed, within the immediate knowledge and experience of the churches of Asia—so near that they could not think of any other. This view is abundantly sustained and verified by the prayer of the martyrs and its answer at the opening of the fifth seal, and also in chap. 11 as you approach the final catastrophe.

7. We must interpret *in harmony with the obvious moral purpose of the book*. What this moral purpose was the book itself abundantly shows. It went to the seven churches of Asia; its mission was to arm them against the temptations incident to deadly persecution; to fire their souls with love to Christ, with zeal for his cause, with the spirit of patient endurance even unto torture and death. To effect such results the writer brings the glories of the risen Savior impressively near; he sets before them the bliss of heaven and the sympathy felt in their case by the myriads around the throne; he testifies to them most tenderly that God sees their tears, notes their agony, will surely render vengeance to their persecutors, joy and peace to their martyred brethren, and everlasting victory to his Zion. All these points came home to their hearts with most thrilling power, because the scenes of agonizing fear and horrible persecution *were so very near*; because the sufferers were their own fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters. "Antipas my faithful martyr was slain *among you*" (2: 13).—Every thing in this book indicates not only an intense moral purpose, but a most *direct* one, bearing upon the very churches then immediately addressed. We must therefore interpret accordingly. We should do great violence to the whole book if we were to construe it to refer primarily to events far away in the remote future from those seven churches—events of which they could possibly have no conception, and to

which they could not apply these predictions. When the book is interpreted as a history of the European kingdoms, which grew out of the disintegrated Roman Empire, continued down to our own day, and of the Roman Catholic church in the great outlines of its history through all time, I must insist that such interpretation is violently *against* the obvious moral purpose of the book. Its first readers could not possibly take this view of its meaning, therefore this view of its meaning can not be the true one. For sensible writers, writing for a present object, must be presumed to write so as to be readily understood by the average minds of their readers. They never write for a great moral purpose in the case of their first readers, and yet write so that not a man of them can possibly understand to what they refer. To write in a manner so utterly beyond their comprehension would inevitably defeat their moral object. Prophecy can by no means be exempted from this rule. Certainly and especially it can not, provided it appears that it was written and sent to particular churches for an obvious moral purpose. Such undeniably is the case of this book.

A broader view of the analogy of scripture prophecy on this point will be useful here. In the Old Testament age, Babylon, Edom, Moab, Philistia, etc., were hostile powers, corresponding to apostate Judaism and Roman Paganism in the age of this book. All these powers became subjects of prophecy. Those of the Old Testament age stand before us undeniably fulfilled and easily interpreted; and therefore give us priceless illustrations of the *method* of such prophecy—the manner of giving it—in other words, the important laws of prophetic interpretation.—The attentive reader of this class of Old Testament prophecies will soon satisfy himself as to these vital points:—(1.) That they were written for a then present moral purpose, viz., to assure the covenant people that Jehovah was on their side, and that, being King of nations, he could and would break down their foes, and visit just retribution upon them;—(2.) Consequently, having a present moral purpose to serve, they were made easily intelligible; were designed, not to hide, but to reveal the coming destiny of those hostile powers, and that they were in fact, so far as we can learn, understood by the prophets and by their first hearers and readers;—(3.) That the events predicted, like those revealed through John to the seven churches, were near at hand and did shortly come to pass. The prophecies of Jeremiah against Babylon (chaps. 50 and 51) had

but few years at most to wait for their fulfillment. The moral effect sought was to be realized upon that generation—the very men who first received the prophecy from his lips or pen. And this was the model and type of the Babylon of the Apocalypse. So the Lord's word by Jeremiah against the Philistines (chap. 47) was fulfilled by a Pharaoh then living and by Nebuchadnezzar then on his throne, and of course with no considerable delay. Of Moab Isaiah (16 : 14) said : "Within three years, as the years of a hireling, and the glory of Moab shall be contemned." Also of Ephraim (Isa. 7 : 8) he said : "Within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken that it be not a people."—Thus it appears that this style of ancient prophecy had a then present mission and straightway performed it; was consequently made plain; was in fact understood by all readers and hearers of average intelligence; and fulfilled its mission in the moral benefit of that generation which first received it. So Christ's prediction to his disciples of the destruction of Jerusalem had a present mission for the men of that generation and fulfilled it.—In the nature of the case the prophecies respecting the promised Messiah had a long time to run. But as to the points now under consideration, those prophecies are not analogous and should be left out of the account. All the prophecies of the Bible that are analogous concur to establish these principles beyond dispute, and therefore must legitimately be accepted and applied in our interpretation of the Apocalypse.

8. Symbols borrowed from the Old Testament should obviously be interpreted in the light of their usage there. A general correspondence of the meaning here to the meaning there should be assumed—a proximate at least, though not perhaps in every case a precise similarity. It being certain that the author had in hand the Old Testament scriptures, but not certain that he had any other book; certain, moreover, that he had read those prophets carefully, intensely, with the deepest love of his heart—that he had made himself familiar with their imagery and symbols as well as with their thoughts; it follows that his own symbols when distinctly traceable to those old prophets should be construed in his book mainly as they are in those original sources. This rule applies to the seals, the trumpets, the vials; to the horses seen in vision; to the locusts; to Babylon, and not least, to the usage of the words "abomination," "harlot," etc., in reference to idolatry

9. While these principles of interpretation suffice to prove that the great body of the book refers to events then near at hand, the well-known usage of prophecy will permit the minds of both prophet and reader to pass over by analogy from these events to others of like general character far in the future—these future events being reached, not through a continuous series of history, filling up the whole interval, but under the law of analogy by which one series of events suggests another of like general character, resting on the same broad principles of God's government. Thus in Christ's prophetic discourse (Mat. 24 and 25) his primary reference is to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (A. D. 70). Yet he also passes over from this event to the analogous one—the final judgment scene. But he does not reach the final judgment by filling up all the interval between the first event and the second with a continuous prophetic history of the events intervening. Some commentators have interpreted Mat. 24 and 25 in this way, but, in my view, without the least reason. The transition from the first event to the second is made by the law of analogy. The same law obtains abundantly in the old prophets, *e. g.*, Isaiah, passing from the fall of Sennacherib's host, compared to the fall of the glory of Lebanon before an archangel's scythe (chap. 10 and 11) to the springing up of the fresh shoot of David from the stump of a cut-down tree.—Accepting this principle of interpretation, we naturally expect the mind of both prophet and reader to be borne onward from the fall of persecuting Judaism and Paganism to the fall of *every foe* hostile to Christ, and to the final triumph of the *Great Conqueror*, as we have it in Rev. 11, and also Rev. 19 and 20.—The main argument for spreading out the visions of this book into a compend of universal history has been that because the series lands us at last in the Millennium, therefore it must take us over and through all the intermediate stages of human history. It might for the same reason be demanded that we spread out the prophecy by Christ in Mat. 24 and 25, by violent and fanciful applications thereof till we make it fill up the entire interval between the fall of Jerusalem and the final judgment. Such methods of interpretation ignore the whole genius of Old Testament prophecy.—I am well aware that many assume this one book of the Bible, the last (as they say) of them all, to have been written, not like the rest of the Bible primarily for the generations then living and near, but primarily and with special

design for the far distant ages—for ourselves and the generations yet to come. They admit, as all sensible men must, that David wrote his psalms for then present use and adapted them accordingly; that Isaiah had his eye primarily upon his own generation in the adaptation of his prophecies, and so also Jeremiah, Ezekiel and all the rest. The internal evidence of a special mission to their own people and of a special adaptation to their case is completely decisive. So of the gospel history; so of all the epistles. —But this book of Revelation they insist must be made an exception to this otherwise universal law. One book at least among so many the Lord could certainly afford to give to us of these latter days by special address and special adaptation, so that we may claim it as meant for us in the same definite sense in which the Jews of the captivity might claim Ezekiel's messages as theirs. —Now this may be a very pretty fancy; but I must be plain enough to say—it can be nothing more. For, the proofs of special address, special design, special adaptation to the seven churches of Asia, are fully as strong and decisive in this book as like proofs are in Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Haggai, or Zechariah. Nor have we the least reason to feel that we are deprived of a right or robbed of a treasure when this book is put on the same footing with all other books of the Bible in respect to original address and adaptation; for we may still use it precisely as we use all the rest of the Bible, *i. e.*, first, get its exact meaning as written and adapted to its first readers for its special purposes; and then apply it all to ourselves as so much general truth good for us according to our circumstances. Knowing the case of its first readers we get a far more definite, precise, life-like sense of its meaning, and therefore have so much more actual truth to apply with the utmost precision to our own case. But a book specially addressed and adapted to the *indefinite ages* could never be soundly and safely interpreted; for who could know the circumstances of the parties addressed? Who could make any use of the landmarks of interpretation which a book of prophecy must needs have, or of necessity remain unintelligible? The endless variety of fanciful interpretations under which this book has suffered above all other books of the Bible is due largely and by necessity to this grand mistake in the very conception of its original design.—Yet again, it will seem to many that the glory of this book is departed if the events which it definitely predicts are narrowed down to the doom of apostate

Jerusalem and of Pagan Rome as great persecuting powers, and we fail to find in it the great outlines of the world's history since the first century of the Christian era, and especially if we fail to find here the Pope and the system he represents. There lies before me "A New Interpretation of the Apocalypse," brought out in 1827, by Rev. George Croley, to which I refer as a sample—a work brilliantly written and eminently popular. He says (p. 2, 3), "It will be shown in the course of the Interpretation that this prophecy includes *in the most direct manner* all those great events which make the framework of history since the first age of Christianity; that it distinctly predicts the establishment of the church under Constantine and his successors" [etc. on through the early, the middle, and the post-middle ages], "the destruction of the Spanish Armada; the civil wars following the overthrow of Protestantism in France in 1685; the wars of Louis XIV.; the French revolution not narrowed down to a few conjectural verses as is usual, but detailed in an entire and unsuspected chapter with its peculiar character of Atheism and anarchy, its subsequent despotism, and its final overthrow by the armies of Europe." Then quite a respectable portion remains for the ages to come, the events being yet future.—Now a prophecy so admirably flexible that ingenious men can find in it all the interesting events of their own times and of times yet fresh in the past—indeed, all the salient points in the world's great history since A. D. 100, must be very attractive to an ingenious commentator, and very amusing, no doubt, to many readers.—Moreover, apart from this exercise of human ingenuity, there is a special religious interest felt by many Protestants in finding here Romanism in the three-fold aspect,—its spiritual abominations, its bloody persecutions, and its destiny of fiery doom. It seems to some of them that this is God's battle-ax made ready to their hand.—Now to all who may be of this mind I wish to say very plainly that I have not the least repugnance to seeing the Pope and Romanism in this prophecy *provided only that God has put them here*. But I have an invincible repugnance to *making* prophecy myself—to bringing into this book by forced or fanciful interpretation any thing which God has not put here. It should be remembered that the book closes with some very monitory words against "adding to the things" herein written. It is a solemn undertaking to make a comment on the words of God. With some sense of the

inexpressible solemnity of this work I am holden most sacredly to follow the landmarks set up by God's own finger. No attractions toward this resulting sense or that—no desire to find or not to find Papal Rome here—can be allowed to move my pen a hair's breadth.—According to my reading of scriptural prophecy God has certain modes of presenting it—follows certain principles in revealing it—gives certain indications (“landmarks” I have called them) which were manifestly designed to guide us to their true meaning and application. All these, I propose to myself and suggest to my readers, should be canvassed with untiring diligence and applied with our utmost coolness of judgment, with unbiased heart and unclouded eye, and above all, with unceasing prayer to the Great Father of light to guide us into all his blessed truth for the good of his Zion and the glory of his name.

THE REVELATION

OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

CHAPTER I.

THE book opens with the source and the channels from which this revelation comes (vs. 1, 2); the blessing promised to the readers and the hearers (v. 3); the address proper of the book, coupled with the apostolic benediction (vs. 4, 5), and ascriptions of glory to Jesus (vs. 5, 6); the announcement of his glorious coming (vs. 7, 8). Then the writer speaks of himself and his circumstances (v. 9); is enjoined to write what he sees and send it to the seven churches (vs. 10, 11); and then describes at length the majestic appearance of the Son of Man (vs. 12-16), and the further instructions embraced in his prophetic commission (vs. 17-20).

1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John:

This revelation is here said to have been made by God to Jesus Christ, implying that in their mutual relations to each other in the scheme of redemption, the Father is supreme, the Son subordinate; and reminding us of those extraordinary words of Jesus as given by Mark (13: 32): "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father."—"Things which must shortly come to pass," must be said in general of the contents of this entire book, and not, as some have supposed, of the first three chapters only. "Shortly" can have no other and no less meaning than *very soon*. This sense of the

original Greek words is absolute and decisive. It is only serious trifling with God's words to say that "*shortly*" may mean a thousand years distant, or two and three thousand, according as the exigencies of some preconceived scheme of interpretation may require. Why should not God be permitted to be his own interpreter and give his own views in regard to the *time* of the events here foretold? The rule of fair common sense must be, that whatever God may say in *explanation* of his own prophecies—*e. g.*, as to the *time* of their fulfillment, must be taken in its plain and most obvious sense. Else how does it *explain* any thing?—Angels were largely employed in making these revelations to John, and made them chiefly (as the word "*signify*" indicates) by the use of signs, symbols.

2. Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

The main question here is, whether the thing said of John, that he "bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Christ," is *historic*, describing him as having long been an apostle and witness for Christ, or whether it should be restricted to his function as a witness to certify faithfully the things revealed to him in Patmos. The latter is most in the line of thought in the context; Jesus revealed these things by his angel to his servant John; and John faithfully reported every thing shown him, for the benefit of the churches.—The last clause should be read without the word "and," which the best authorities rule out of the Greek text—the sense then being, "whatsoever things he saw;" *i. e.*, *so far forth* as revelations were made to him, he wrote them.

3. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

This grouping of "him that readeth" with "those that hear" contemplates the public reading in their Christian assemblies. We should bear in mind that printed Bibles were then unknown; that manuscript copies were few and very costly, and therefore the hearers would far outnumber the readers.—The blessing promised to both classes implies that these words had a great moral purpose; were designed and adapted for the spiritual good of the Christians addressed; and moreover, that John, and the inditing Spirit no less, sought by every proper consideration to press the brethren to a diligent study of this book. Let every reader to-day accept this suggestion and strive for this promised blessing!—"Keep those things written therein" assumes that *duty* is enjoined here. Blessed are those who open their hearts to the inspiring power of this book, and are prompted thereby to the utmost fidelity in doing the duties which it reveals. These duties were pre-eminently, patient suffering and unswerving fidelity to Christ amid

scenes of fiercest trial and persecution unto blood.—Again the idea is reiterated, “*for the time is at hand.*” Read this book without delay; receive into your mind its timely revelations; take home to your souls its inspiring influences—for these fearful scenes of blood and death are close upon you!

4. John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come: and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne:

5. And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

The address, “John to the seven churches,” must certainly include the whole book, and not the contents of chapters second and third only. So v. 11 declares explicitly, “What thou seest”—*i. e.*, *all* that thou shalt see, send to those churches.—The invocation follows, imploring in their behalf grace and peace—every spiritual blessing. But *from whom?* This question involves some difficulty.—The tenor of the apostolic benediction—“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost” (2 Cor. 13: 14), naturally leads us to think here of the Trinity, the threefold personal manifestation of the one God. In accordance with this analogy we begin with applying to the Father the phrase, “Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.” It is generally held by competent critics that this Greek phrase translates as to its meaning the Hebrew word *Jehovah*, which signifies The eternally *Existent One*, the Great Immutible, who is therefore the faithful Promiser (see Ex. 3: 14, and Hos. 12: 5). But we must not overlook the fact that in this context (vs. 8, 11, and elsewhere) these descriptive terms are applied precisely to the Son of God, probably with special reference to his pre-existent nature. Must we not therefore say that the main purpose in this chapter is not so much to develop doctrinally the fact and the relations of the Trinity, as to set forth the true divinity as well as the glorious humanity of the Son of God, and thus give the churches of Asia the true view of his exalted character and work?

What precise idea shall we find in the second phrase—“The seven Spirits which are before his throne?”—The parallel and explanatory passages to be considered are onward 3: 1, and 4: 5, and 5: 6. “These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;” “There were seven lamps of fire

burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;” “There stood a lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”—Then furthermore we must inquire whether we can trace this peculiar description to any source in the Old Testament prophets, and thus obtain light in regard to its meaning. Under this inquiry we must consider Zech. 3: 9 and 4: 10: ‘Behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts;’ “They shall see the stone [‘plummet’] in the hand of Zerubbabel with these seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.” Perhaps also Isaiah 11: 2, where the Spirit of the Lord which rested upon the Messiah is thought by some to have a seven-fold designation.—This phrase—“The seven spirits which are before the throne,” has been interpreted variously, *e. g.* : 1. To signify the seven archangels, ministering to Jesus and for him in his great work of redemption. 2. To denote the spiritual and providential agencies and powers with which Jesus is invested and which he employs in the realms of providence and grace. This view would include all the agencies of universal providence as well as the spiritual agencies of the Holy Ghost. Strictly speaking it does not involve distinct personality—nothing in this direction beyond poetic personification. 3. The Holy Ghost, the third person of the Trinity, in his distinct personality.—Let us examine these diverse opinions.

1. That these seven spirits are seven archangels is thought by some to find support in the circumstance that they are said to be “before the throne,” *i. e.*, in the waiting attitude of servants; also, that they are associated with “the seven stars” as being in like manner in the possession and sacred to the service of the Son of God [3: 1: “Saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars”]; and that they appear again in symbol as seven lamps of fire burning before the throne (4: 5).—The strong and, as I think, fatal objection to this view lies in the exigencies of this invocation of “grace and peace.” Can we possibly suppose that the seven archangels are classed with the Father and the Son as being equally or even conjointly with them the source and the authors of grace and peace to the churches? Surely this is new doctrine to our Bible. It ignores the infinite distance between the true God, the Infinite One, and even the most exalted of his created subjects. Grace and peace, first from the Eternal Father; next from his seven archangels; last from the Eternal and Infinite Son! This is the next thing to praying to the seven archangels. It certainly must assume that they are, in substantially an equivalent sense, the source and the fountain of grace and peace to human souls. The Bible and reason both revolt at this!

2. The second theory—viz., that the phrase describes the jointly

providential and spiritual agencies wielded by Jesus Christ in the scheme of redemption, but of course not involving any distinct personality, finds its chief support in its supposed and perhaps probable allusion to the passages quoted above (Zech. 3: 9 and 4: 10), and its chief objection in the circumstance that here we naturally look for real personality. The passages in Zechariah manifestly treat of God's providential and spiritual agencies in the discipline of his people and in the care of his Zion. I think that probably John had those passages so far in his mind as to take from them the number *seven*, and the general idea of *diverse* agencies. Then, thinking also of the New Testament illustrations of the manifold workings of this "one and the same Spirit," his language took the form we see—"the seven Spirits of God." With the orientals seven is the perfect number—that which indicates completeness; diversity, yet unity and perfection.—As said above, the chief objection to this second theory is that a prayer for grace and peace should be offered to a personal agent and not to an impersonal agency. May the blessings of grace come to you (a) from God the Father; (b) from his various agencies; (c) from his Eternal Son—is incongruous. It is not so unchristian and unscriptural as the theory of seven archangels; but a better theory is at hand.

3. The only view which seems to me to meet the exigencies of this passage remains to be considered, viz., that by the seven Spirits of God is meant the *Holy Ghost*, as specially revealed in the gospel age. This is entirely in harmony with the tone and the nature of this invocation. Is it also in harmony with the description given in this verse and with the subsequent notices of "the seven Spirits" in this book?—He is one of the three divine persons from whom Paul (2 Cor. 13: 14) invokes spiritual blessings. That he is conceived of as *seven-fold* need not surprise us if we consider the diversity of his spiritual gifts and operations; the probable allusion to the "seven eyes" of Zechariah (as above shown) or the abundant use of the number seven in this book of Revelation. That he should be seen "*before the throne*" does indeed imply a readiness for service; but benevolent service is no dishonor to his heart, and is in no wise derogatory to his true divinity. That Jesus should say of himself (3: 1), "He that hath the seven Spirits of God," etc., means only what is implied in his own first and chief words concerning the "Comforter:" "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter" (John 14: 16); "whom the Father will send in my name" (John 14: 26); "whom I will send unto you from the Father.....he shall testify of me" (15: 26); "I will send him unto you" (16: 7); "He shall glorify me" (16: 14). It was obviously most fitting that in these messages to the seven churches Jesus should reveal himself in the exalted dignity of his relations as the Giver of the Holy Ghost.—The seven Spirits of God are also presented in symbolic vision (1: 5) as "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne."

Using the figure "lamps of fire" as only a humble stepping-stone to help us to reach the sublime idea of light, brilliancy, and glory, we may suppose a special reference here to the function of the Spirit as *the great Revealer of God, the Infinite Teacher*, sent forth to give *light* concerning God and to impress all truths respecting him upon created minds.—That the Lamb as seen in vision (5: 6) appears with "seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth," is an effort to present in symbol the infinite power ["horns"], and the infinite spiritual forces of light and truth ["eyes"] which are embodied in the Holy Ghost and sent forth by the Son according to his own words (as above quoted) to his disciples.—Thus this interpretation of the seven Spirits of God as in our passage is fully in harmony with the teaching of Christ in the New Testament respecting the work and mission of the Holy Ghost, and also with the scope of these first chapters of our book as designed to set forth the transcendent dignity and glory of Jesus Christ. This interpretation therefore fully meets the exigencies of the case and must for every reason be adopted.

The sacred Three from whom blessing are invoked is completed by naming Jesus Christ.—The three descriptive points of his person should be specially noted: (a) "The faithful Witness," who "before Pontius Pilate witnessed a noble confession," as said by Paul (1 Tim. 6: 14) and as may be seen (John 18: 36); who never faltered before persecution and whose example therefore as a faithful witness [martyr] for God and his truth was eminently in point for the churches of Asia at this time. (b) "The first-born of the dead;" the first to break the bonds of death and rise to immortal life and glory—to be thought of now, therefore, not as one dead but as one living—living in all the majesty and power of a conqueror over Death and the Grave; and (c) As Lord of all lords and King of all the kings of the earth, whose power over the mightiest and proudest of them was to be so signally manifested in these visions, for the comfort of his suffering and down-crushed people.—The course of thought in the words that follow is an outgushing of the heart in grateful love and adoration. Think what Jesus hath suffered and wrought for us! Unto Him that *loves* [rather than "loved"], who loves us now, has loved us in all the past, and will love us in all the future, forever, and hath once for all [past] washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us a kingdom (according to the corrected text, rather than "kings") and priests unto God even his Father;—to Him be all glory and dominion forever! Who so worthy as He to wear the crown of the Universe—to bear the glories of the heavenly world? Let our loving, grateful hearts adore him now and forever. Amen!—It was well for those who were subjected to fiery trial even unto blood to think of this once suffering Jesus and of all the pains he bore for his people even unto blood and death to "wash them from their sins." So it is well for us in

these latter days to think of that great man of sorrows and of his quenchless love for us what time soever temptation may try our heart and Satan would discourage or frighten our weary souls. —“Washed us from our sins in his own blood” bears the strongest testimony to the two-fold significance of the atonement, *i. e.*, *remission* of past sins through innocent blood shed for the guilty, and *moral cleansing* from the spirit of sinning forevermore. For if moral cleansing were the only element, blood which is properly defiling could not have been the symbol. But blood must come in to signify the ground of remission, pardon—as the whole genius of the sacrificial system testifies. Hence we have both ideas, remission and cleansing, in this comprehensive and briefest possible language—“washed us from our sins in his blood.”

7. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

To what “*coming*” does this passage refer?—The reader who shall carefully study the words of our Lord in Mat. 24: 29–31, and 16: 27, 28, and 10: 23, and in kindred passages also, will readily see that John here refers to those declarations, using the same words, and therefore doubtless in the same sense. Here we have “cometh with clouds;” there, “coming in the clouds of heaven:” here, “every eye shall see him;” there, “they [‘all the tribes of the earth’] shall see the Son of man coming:” here, all the kindreds of the earth [or land] shall wail because of him;” there, “then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn.” “They also who pierced him” looks definitely to the prophecy of Zechariah (12: 10); “They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him.”—Examining those words of our Lord in the passages above named we shall see that he seems to have before his mind both of his two great comings then future (the first suggesting the second); the first, to set up his gospel kingdom with power by sending down the Holy Ghost and by destroying Jerusalem: the second, for the final judgment of all mankind;—using some language that might (in itself considered) apply to his more remote coming; but also giving some definite limitations of time which compel us to say that the first coming was certainly in his mind as the primary and main thing intended. These are some of the limitations: “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled” (Mat. 24: 34). “Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Mat. 16: 28). “Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come” (Mat. 10: 23). “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” (John 21: 22). These limitations are entirely decisive. They compel us to admit that Jesus did use the language above quoted of *his*

first coming—the nearer one—to establish his kingdom by the mission of his Spirit and by removing out of the way the first great obstacle to its prosperity—the rotten Judaism of that age and its representative city, Jerusalem.—It may be briefly said here in passing, that according to the genius of prophecy, Jesus might pass readily by analogy from his first coming, then near, to his second. So he manifestly does in Mat. 25, giving us some of the grand events of his second coming which were so powerfully suggested by his first coming.—In the passage now before us the general drift of thought in the former part of this book strongly favors its primary reference to the first great coming of Christ to establish his kingdom on earth by the gift of his Spirit and the overthrow of Judaism and Jerusalem. It may have been literally true that some of those who shouted, “Crucify him!” lived to “wail because of him” in overwhelming anguish over the ruin of their city and the wreck of all their hopes. There is sometimes a terrible significance in God’s visible, present retributions!

8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Many of my readers will not need to be told that “Alpha” is the name of the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and “Omega” of the last, so that these words have the sense, ‘The First and the Last; the One who is *before* all the created things of the universe, the Great Creator of all, and whose power and glory are to be specially manifested in the closing up, the consummation, of all that pertains to this world, including both things material and things moral—the great globe itself and the destinies of all the moral agents who shall ever have lived upon it. This is much more than simply coming into existence before any other being and outliving them all; *i. e.*, the language used of Jesus Christ, involves and implies much more than its terms in themselves necessarily include.—In the original, some of the oldest manuscripts omit—“the beginning and the ending.” These words may have been introduced by some copyist to explain the meaning of the Greek words “Alpha” and “Omega” for the benefit of readers not familiar with that language. Omitted or retained, the sense of the passage is the same.—The point most worthy to be specially noted in the verse is that Jesus here assumes for himself the very names—“The Lord, which is, and which was, and is the Coming One,”—which are given to the Father, in v. 4. “All things that the Father hath” (said Jesus, John 16: 15) “are mine.” It is strongly the purpose in this chapter and indeed onward through the book, to present Jesus Christ in his exalted character and relations, so that Christians then sorely tempted and tried might not think of him as once in weakness he walked the earth, often barely escaping the malice of his foes, and finally falling into their hands

for torture and death; but rather, as living for evermore, the very God, all glorious, almighty to save or to destroy, the arbiter of all human destinies—death to his foes; salvation and infinite glory to his friends. In these views of him there must have been a marvelous power of inspiration toward the stability and endurance of the faithful martyr.

9. I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The writer introduces himself more definitely. It was genial and winning in him to say—"Your brother," one who suffers in common with yourselves under sore tribulation for the sake of the kingdom and the truth of our Lord Jesus.—He was in the isle of Patmos, well known to the brethren of the seven churches, for it lay only a little off the coast from Ephesus; small—being only some eight miles by one—barren, rocky, and rough, looking out upon the great deep sea—fit place for the manifestations of heavenly visions sublimely grand and magnificent, but as to all human relationships and enjoyments, a desolate place of exile. There John was shut up because he would preach the gospel and bear his testimony for Jesus.

10. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

It was on the Lord's day, the Christian Sabbath, when suddenly he passed into that peculiar prophetic state expressed by the words—"in Spirit"—a state in which the prophet is put in special communication with the Holy Ghost as the Revealer of prophetic truth. His ear was opened to hear the very voice of Jesus, and his eye to see (as in the present case) his sublimely glorious form.—It avails little to speculate as to the psychological nature of this prophetic state. Experience only can give it.

11. Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

"What thou seest"—*i. e.*, *all* that is now to be shown thee in the successive visions which make up this entire book. The word "seest" refers properly to the visions—those of chaps. 4-22, rather than to the verbal messages which appear in chaps. 2 and 3. Yet we may admit these chapters (2 and 3) as included in the command, and attribute the choice of the word "seest" before *hearest*,

to the circumstance that by far the greater part of the book is made up of visions presented to the eye.—Many commentators have restricted this command to the messages that were simply *heard* (not *seen* at all), which occupy chapters second and third, practically if not avowedly denying its reference to the real *visions*—the things *seen*. Such construction is utterly against the fair and necessary sense of the words. They are laboring to make out that the real *visions* of the book were neither written, sent, or adapted to the seven churches of Asia. It is much better to let the book speak for itself and become its own interpreter.—Some geographical and historical notes upon these seven cities, from which these churches take their name will be given where their names come up in detail (chaps. 2 and 3).

12. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

“Turned to see the voice,” *i. e.*, the author of the voice, the speaker. The precise sense of the original is, to see whoever it might be whose unrecognized voice I had heard.—This prophetic symbol, “candlestick,” to represent a church (see the explanation in v. 20), comes obviously from Zech. 4. The essential idea is given by our Lord (Mat. 5: 14, and John 8: 12): “Ye are the *light* of the world;” and by Paul (Phil. 2: 15) more closely because in the concrete form: “Ye shine as *lights* (luminaries, or light-bearers) in the world.” What light is to the eye, that knowledge is to the mind. Hence the teachers of truth are in symbol, light-bearers.

13. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

“In the midst,” etc., to indicate the perpetual presence of Christ among his churches, with his people.—“One like a Son of man,” rather than *the* Son. The Greek is without the article, the sense being, not that this personage resembled him whom I saw often in the days of his flesh; but merely that though clad with surpassing effulgence of glory, yet the form was *human*—the resemblance that of man. The critical reader will note that when Jesus so often spake of himself as “the Son of man” (of which cases there are said to be eighty), he always used the article—“*the* Son of man.” The expression in our verse therefore does not class itself with those.—His outer garment fell to the feet, and a golden girdle was passed round *at* the breasts. This of course was (fitly) the oriental costume of royalty, the dress worn by kings, and associated with the highest ideas of dignity and exaltation.

14. His head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of fire;

In the point of whiteness this symbol is perhaps in imitation of "the Ancient of days" as shown to Daniel (7: 9), "whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool." It may blend the two ideas—whiteness as the symbol of purity, and white hairs as the crown and the glory of patriarchal age.—The eyes, always the most expressive and most spiritual among the parts and organs of the human frame, are as a flame of fire. Light, brilliancy, energy, thrilling power—all combined—can be set forth by no more pertinent symbol than this—"a flame of fire." Such were his eyes.

15. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

"Brass," one of the oriental symbols of strength, is heightened here by a glowing radiance, compared to metal burning in a furnace.—His voice, deep, grand, majestic as the roar of the sea, was imagery wonderfully fresh and expressive to John, sitting often on the barren cliffs of Patmos, listening to the surging billows and breakers at his feet.

16. 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 shineth in his strength.

Think of the grandeur of this scene—seven stars held in his right hand; out of his mouth a sharp two-edged sword—strikingly significant of his piercing words—armed with a power of truth which none could gainsay, and with a majesty and terror of threatening before which earth and heaven flee away!—And then to crown this wonderfully impressive manifestation, his countenance was as the sun in his peerless effulgence when his unclouded face pours forth such light and heat as no mortal eye can bear.—The "sword from the mouth" seems violent and unnatural when thought of as *seen*, yet the significance is clear and the representation full of power. While all the other points in this description are at once surpassingly grand and also in harmony with nature, this seems somewhat out of such harmony. But let its surpassing energy atone for its apparent rudeness.—In view of this unparalleled manifestation of the sublimest elements of grandeur, dignity and power, it were of small avail for us to inquire whether this represents the risen Jesus as he now appears upon his throne in the highest heavens. On this point let us suppress our curiosity and postpone our inquiries till the light of heaven shall burst on our eyes. It is enough here to say that this manifestation to John had a definite moral purpose, jointly for him and for those whom he, or rather Jesus through him, addressed—the seven churches. It was important that both John and his brethren of those churches should think of the risen Jesus as no longer the frail, suffering, feeble man of Nazareth, nor even

merely as the risen personage who appeared from time to time during forty days after his resurrection; but far other than either of those forms and indefinitely more glorious—as now invested with splendor and glory higher than which no forms of matter known to us have ever attained—a voice surpassing all human range and power—an eye piercing and thrilling, far above the merely human—a countenance that gathered into itself the effulgence of dazzling, overwhelming glory. The purposed moral impression of this scene can not be mistaken. Let the churches know that their risen Redeemer is mighty; is crowned with glory and honor and set over the realm of nature and the empire of the world, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Let them have no fear as to the final triumph of his cause. Let them shrink from no endurance of pain even to death for his sake. Let it be settled forever in their souls that such a Savior is strong to sustain his friends or to crush his foes; that his promised rewards are ineffably glorious, but that his wrath burns to the lowest hell, to the unutterable dismay of his proudest, mightiest enemies. Such manifestations of such a Savior were adapted with Divine wisdom to arm them for the conflict through which they were so soon to pass.

17. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

18. *I am* he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

The view was overpowering. There is a limit to human endurance under such an effulgence of glory. Jesus kindly relieved his mind of the sense of terror, and soothed his agitated emotions with words and tones of comfort.—“The first and the last” only puts in simpler form what was first said (v. 8) in the words, “I am Alpha and Omega.” As to the sense, “I am the first and the last” means, not properly, the first to come into being and the last to cease to be; not, I antedate all other beings and I shall outlast them all; but this—I am the first Cause of all that have existence, the infinite Creator of all; and I am also the *Arbiter of their destinies*, having infinite control of *all last things*. This construction gives the only admissible sense of these words taken in themselves, and is also sustained by the immediate context.—“I am he that liveth” is put forcibly by the Greek participle: I am *the living One*; this is for evermore my distinctive attribute—*the living One*, in a sense which implies both perpetual existence in himself and the source of existence to all created beings. Passing, by the most sudden transition, from the divine to the human, he says, I was indeed for a short time “dead,” but mark, behold! I am now *the living One* for evermore. Also I have absolute power over Death

and Hell. The agencies of Death upon this sinning race, and the worlds where all departed souls abide, are under my supreme control. I open or shut their gates at my will.—Death and Hell (Hades) are here personified as in Rev. 6 : 8, and 20 : 13, 14.—It would lead us too far aside from the current of thought here to discuss and present at length the precise and correlated meanings of the New Testament words Hades and Gehenna: Hades, the invisible world whither go the spirits of all the dead, some to woe and some to bliss (Luke 16 : 19-26); Gehenna, exclusively the place and the doom of the lost (Mat. 5 : 29, 30, and 10 : 28, and Mark 9 : 47, etc.). Suffice it here to say that our passage sets forth this glorious Personage as having the absolute rule over both Death himself and the destinies of all the dead who people that invisible realm of existence which lies immediately beyond this.

19. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter ;

The middle clause, "The things which are," Prof. Stuart and some others construe to mean, *what they are, i. e.*, what they signify. Write out the visions and *their significance*. This seems to me too remote from the primary and usual sense of the verb *to be*. I prefer this construction of the whole verse: "Therefore, since the divine Jesus who speaks to thee rules the destinies of both the living and the dead, and has the great future in his eye and in his shaping hand, write what things thou hast seen and shalt see" [the Greek aorist tense covering the recently present and the nearer future], and then, expanding the thought more fully he adds—"both the things which are and the things which shall be closely after these." Some of these visions revealed things present; some, things near in the future: he is commanded to write down both.

20. The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

He explains the seven stars in his right hand to denote the seven angels to as many churches. They are angels no doubt in the usual sense of messengers. But since their mission lies not between Jesus and John, but between John and the churches, they are not superhuman, but human—so many individual men through whom John was to address those churches. What other functions they held besides that of communicating John's messages, this book does not tell us; no other document informs us; it is therefore of small avail for us to speculate about it. Their relations were not *diocesan, i. e.*, over many churches, for the record here restricts them each to his own, and moreover gives no hint

of ecclesiastical power in them beyond what is implied in conveying a written message from John—not to say that if those churches had any diocesan, John himself should have been the man. We must pass this much litigated question with only these brief hints.



CHAPTER II.

Here are four of the seven special letters addressed respectively to Ephesus (1-7); to Smyrna (8-11); to Pergamos (12-17); and to Thyatira (18-29). Obviously the reason for a distinct message to each lay in what was peculiar in their respective cases; in the tone of their love, their stability, their Christian work, the errors of doctrine and of practice which had crept in to pervert their sentiments and corrupt their Christian life. While the visions that follow and make up the body of the book would be pertinent to them all and therefore are addressed without distinction to them all, the brief messages recorded in chapters 2 and 3 were wisely addressed to these churches severally.

Geographically these cities lay on a curved line somewhat in the shape of a horse-shoe magnet so that they might be taken by a tourist in the very order in which they stand in this book: thus from Ephesus north to Smyrna, 40 miles; thence north to Pergamos, 60 miles; thence east to Thyatira, 30 miles; thence south to Sardis, 40 miles; thence south-east to Philadelphia, 30 miles; thence south-east to Laodicea, 50 miles. Near the last named lay Colosse and Hierapolis. Of the seven cities, the first three were maritime; the others were inland on the returning portion of the curve.

EPHESUS.

1. Unto 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;

2. I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3. And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.

Ephesus was the home of the Apostle John, from which it is generally conceded he was banished, and to which when free to do so he returned to reside, and where tradition locates his sep-

uleher. It was the great city of Asia Minor, famous for the worship of Diana. The reader will readily recall the labors and history of Paul in this city (Acts 18: 19-21, and 19, and 20: 17-38) as also his letter to them.—The Ephesian brethren are first reminded of the dignity and glory of the great Author of this message, “holding the seven stars in his right hand” in the sense of *upholding* those faithful messengers by whom these words were sent; also “walking amid the seven golden candlesticks” with perpetual presence and omniscient eye. Therefore, with bated breath and reverent spirit, let them listen to his words.—“I know” is intensely expressive. Ye may have thought (John would say) that Jesus, your professed Lord, is far away and takes no special notice of your heart or life. No mistake could be greater. The heart and the life of every one of you are ever before him.—Jesus is careful to notice with commendation whatever will bear it. So always.

4. Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

The italic word “*somewhat*” were better omitted, the sense being, not that I have a small account, a *somewhat* of perhaps trivial sort, against thee; but I have *this* against thee, “that thou hast left thy first love.” This losing thy first love I have against thee as thy great sin. How couldst thou forget my blood and tears for thee; how could thine heart lose the freshness, life, and power of thy first love to thine own Redeemer, thine own best Friend!—It should be carefully noted that this losing of first love is accounted a great sin, most offensive to Jesus, most grievous to his ever loving and ever constant heart. This assumes that such loss of first love is by no means a necessity of the Christian life; must not be excused as a thing of course—an inevitable result, and therefore a trivial and scarcely censurable offence. This view of it is sometimes taken;—alas, that it should be! How cruel to the heart of Jesus! How strangely unreasonable in itself! How perilous to the constancy and growth of young Christians must such teaching be!—It is pertinent here to say that this decline of the Ephesian brethren from their first love was the very point of their special *danger* as well as of their special guilt. We are not told what peculiar temptation had stolen away their heart and broken down their love for Jesus. Perhaps it was the fascinations of a great city, the dominant spirit of worldliness, polluting (socially) the very atmosphere they breathed; but be it what it may, it cut the sinews of their Christian strength as against the fiery temptations that were to come upon them; it begat a spiritual state in which they would surely fall before the first fierce blast of persecution which should summon them to torture or to death for Jesus. Nothing short of the purest, warmest love for Jesus could abide such an ordeal. Hence the solemn and fearfully earnest rebuke and admonition which follow.

5. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Recall thy first love and mark how deep thou hast fallen. "*Repent*," in the twofold sense of deploring thy sin and of turning thy heart from it. "Do the former works" of warm and earnest love and fresh devotion to thy Lord—implying what is always true, that the love which Christ requires is not a mere emotion that stirs only the sensibilities, and may flow off in tears or evanesce in raptures, but leave no result in true Christian *work* for Jesus. Altogether unlike this sentimentalism—this emotion of the novel reader who has tears but nothing else for human suffering or want—the love that Jesus calls for has *work* in it and evermore coming out of it; for what saith he? "If ye love me, *keep my commandments*." "He that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me" (John 14: 15, 21). Therefore returning to one's first love is synonymous with "doing thy first works."—By what consideration is this urged? "Else I will come unto thee quickly"—but not in blessings—not to give thee fresh tokens of approval and esteem; but to "remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Christ would own them as his church no longer; would smite down the golden candlestick and doom the church to extinction!—Of the nearer future of this Ephesian church we have no record in the New Testament. But we do know that for centuries past, that once proud city has been a ruin; from that Christian candlestick no light has gone forth for many ages! That threatening was but too significant of her prophetic future!

6. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

On the question who were these "Nicolaitans?" there has been much difference of opinion among critics. The data for an entirely decisive conclusion seem lacking.—(a) The theory that this sect takes its name from Nicolas, "a proselyte of Antioch," one of the seven deacons (Acts 6: 5), is almost baseless.—(b) The theory that the word has etymological affinities with *Balaam*, both alike having the sense, *destroyers of the people*, lacks adequate support. In vs. 14, 15, below, these two sects seem to be really though not perhaps very broadly distinguished. The utmost that can be safely said is that this sect in some points—perhaps some leading points—resembled the Balaamites described in v. 14. See notes on that passage.

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.

Each message introduces its closing promise to the victorious one by this special and solemn call to attention in the same words essentially which so often fell from the lips of our Lord (*e. g.*, Mat. 11: 15, and 13: 9, 43, etc.) In the form here used they were reminded that the words he sent them were said by the divine Spirit—God's own voice of warning and of promise.—As said in the Introduction, the promise to the conquering one is in this case taken from the closing chapters of the book—the privilege of eating from the tree of life along the banks of the river of heaven. That marvelous wealth of promise which the glorious symbolism of this book has made available is here brought to bear upon the Christian life of the church of Ephesus to tide them over the breakers that lay before them. O, what blessings are these for the conquerors!

SMYRNA.

8. And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

9. I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan.

10. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall 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.

The descriptive points of the speaker are taken from 1: 8, 17, 18.—Remarkably the tone of this message is commendatory without exception. Jesus seems to say with free and joyous heart—I know all thy fidelity and endurance for my sake; I know thy poverty as to the wealth of this world—but thou art rich in faith and in grace, the best of all riches. I know too the opposition and persecution against thee endured already and yet to be endured—but it shall be short.—It is possible that the Jews spoken of here made no profession of being Christians, but probable that they were the Judaizers who were so prominent in that age. Their claim to be Jews, I take, not in the sense of being lineal descendants of Abraham, but of being true worshipers of God, praisers of his name after the etymology of the word Judah—from which the name "Jew" came—(Gen. 29: 35 and 49: 8). Professing to be the people of God above all others, they were really doing only the work of Satan; bigoted and self-conceited were

they, but so far from being praisers of God, they were blasphemers: so far from being a synagogue of his worshipers, they were only a "synagogue of Satan."—These facts go far to prove that the corrupt Judaism of the early and mid-apostolic age was still rife and earnest, and consequently that the crushing blow given it in the destruction of Jerusalem and the consequent dispersion of the Jews and prostration of their influence, had not yet fallen.—Observe that their persecutions are traced to the devil as their cause and author. It was well to show the churches where the root and mainspring of these persecutions lay. They would then understand better the nature of the fight in which they were parties and sufferers, and in which Jesus was to be their Almighty Savior and Deliverer—the grand antagonist of Satan; sure to conquer in the end.—"Be thou faithful unto death," seems to mean, not merely as long as you may live, till your life-power is exhausted and you fall asleep in your quiet bed; but rather, even to a martyr's death quail not, shrink not; face the rack or the flame till your soul is forced from its bodily mansion. Then I will give thee a crown of immortal life.

11. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

The conquering one has the promise (taken up from 20: 14, and 21: 8) that he "shall never be hurt by that fearful second death." The first death may come upon him in forms of violence and torture, but of the woes of the second death he shall know nothing. Let this inspire his soul to endure; let this be his consolation!—Of all these seven ancient cities, Smyrna alone remains great, of undiminished population and trade, though the glory of its architecture and the magnificence of its civilization have mostly passed away. Its population is estimated at 100,000. A fine harbor and a fertile inland country secure for it an extensive commerce. It is remarkable that precisely the one city in which the church was then poor in wealth but rich in faith and against which the Savior brings no censure, should be the one alone of all to survive the desolations of ages.

PERGAMOS.

12. And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

The descriptive point which in this case designates the speaker is taken from 1: 16—the sword going forth from his mouth, sharp, double-edged—for his words were with power; a symbol fearfully pertinent in this case because there were many things in this

church to condemn and but too much occasion for using this fearful sword!

13. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's seat *is*: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

I can appreciate thy works of true allegiance and firm endurance for my name in the light of all those stern surroundings—thy city the place of Satan's throne where he instigated his minions to murder my faithful Antipas. That when this noble martyr fell, the brethren of Pergamos did not deny the name of Jesus was to their honor. He will not forget it.

14. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

"A few things against thee," must not be omitted. Here were some of those pernicious teachers whose errors were a close imitation of that foul policy of Balaam who taught Balak the shortest way to ruin a people in covenant with God, viz., to seduce them into idolatry and fornication.—This historic allusion to Balaam will be readily understood by comparing Num. 25, with 31: 16, the former passage giving the facts of shameful lewdness between Israel and Moab; and the latter ascribing this lewdness to the counsel given by Balaam to the king of Moab. See also 2 Peter 2: 15, 16.—These temptations, bearing upon converts from life-long heathenism, must have been fearfully seductive. The eating of things offered in sacrifice to idols would naturally be the stepping-stone back to idol worship, as it was also the crucial test of conformity to the idolatrous spirit of the age. It would lead to mingling socially in the scenes of idol worship, and being connected with shameless fornication would naturally plunge them into the very depths of heathen abominations. No wonder Jesus should "have a few things against them" if they could tolerate in their communion such doctrine and such practice for a single hour.

15. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

The approved reading has in the last clause *in like manner* [ὁμοίως] instead of "which things I hate." Thus we have two Greek words in this verse (the first and the last) which indicate the strong similarity in some respect between the Nicolaitans and the

Balaamites. "So" [ὁμοίως]—a thing involving like guilt—"thou hast also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans *in the same manner*"—which naturally means, with the same results of shameless licentiousness and practical idolatry. The precise thing said is not that the two doctrines were the same, but that they were *held similarly*—which seems to mean with like guilt in the church that permits it, and with the same horrible fruits of moral corruption.—This gives us the most reliable clue we have to the real doctrine which bore the name of the Nicolaitans, (see v. 6). Since it was a "*doctrine*," something studiously taught, yet plunging its followers deep into the pollutions of idolatry, it could not fail to call for the sternest reprobation.

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

The judgment threatened against those who will not repent takes its form from the point made in the description of the august Speaker—a sword proceeding from his mouth! words that will surely do execution!

17. 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 hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

To the victor in this stern Christian conflict, Jesus will give first "the hidden manna." This should carry our thought to the use made of the manna of the wilderness by Jesus as given by John in his gospel (6: 31-58), and affords incidental proof that the same John wrote both the "Revelation" and the gospel. The sense seems to be, the "bread of life"—the counterpart to the water of life as in Rev. 22: 1—and itself the fruit of the tree of life.—He will also give him "a white stone," significant of acquittal, as black was of condemnation. Also "a new name" upon it, known only to the receiver. This seems to be put in contrast with confessing his name before the angels (Luke 12: 8), and naturally refers to those personal testimonies of his approval which are currently known as "the witness of the Spirit"—which when real are the pledge and earnest of acceptance before Christ at the last day.—Further, the preciousness of this "new name" is set forth vividly by its application to the Great Conqueror himself (19: 12). Compare also 3: 12.—"And they *shall be mine*, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels" (Mal. 3: 17).—A somewhat different view of the source whence the symbols of this verse are taken may be suggested. It supposes that looking rather into the Old Testament than the New, John had his eye on the manna that was really *hidden* in the sacred ark of the covenant in the most holy place, whence his thought passes to

the sacred *name* worn on the breastplate of the high priest when he entered that holy place once a year—a name of which no Jew was supposed to know the significance. But the name of Jesus now takes the place once held by that incommunicable name, and this name becomes the badge and the glory of all his accepted people.—The resulting sense is not essentially modified by these minor questions as to the source and explication of the figures employed—a fortunate circumstance in this case, because these questions are by no means easy to decide—perhaps I should say, seem scarcely capable of very decisive solution.

THYATIRA.

18. And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write ; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass ;

A village of one thousand people marks the site of the ancient Thyatira. The Lydia whom Paul met at Philippi, and whose heart the Lord opened, was from this city.—The descriptive points which designate the Author of this message set forth his searching of the heart—eyes before which no wickedness can stand, and no disguises can hide the guilty! “His feet as fine brass” betoken strength and majesty in his going forth.

19. I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works ; and the last *to be* more than the first.

As usual Jesus commends whatever is commendable. The list of good qualities here is long and interesting, especially the fact (last named) of *progress*—unlike Ephesus, where the brethren had been falling back. Here they had been moving forward—their last works more and better than their first. Clearly this proves two points: (1.) That such progress in the Christian life and in Christian work is practicable; (2.) That Jesus warmly approves it. Let us make practical note of both these points.

20. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

The weight of ancient textual authority and of critical opinion makes the text, not “that woman,” but *thy wife*. This raises the question, *Whose* wife? That of the messenger (“angel”) of this church, or of the church itself? The latter would be an unnatural figure and therefore improbable. Hence I prefer the former, and assume that she was the wife of the person to whom the letter was

addressed and by whom it was sent to the church. I take "Jezebel" to be, not her original proper name, but a name of historic significance. She was a *second* Jezebel. The reader will recall the scriptural record of this paragon of wickedness and also of resolution, will, policy and seductive power (1 Kings 16: 30-33, and 21, and 2 Kings 9: 30-37). Herself the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, bred an idolater and trained to bear sway, she brought into Israel an enormous power for evil, sweeping both Ahab and his people fearfully away from the ancient worship of Jehovah into the gross idolatry of her native country.—Like her this second Jezebel, pretending to be a prophetess and espousing the doctrines and practices against which the first Christian Council (Acts 15: 20, 29) admonished Gentile converts, she mightily seduced the servants of Christ into fornication and the eating of things sacrificed to idols. These two practices are manifestly associated together. See notes on v. 14.

21. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

On the question whether this "fornication" were literal, or only the spiritual idea of idol worship, I hold the former view for three main reasons: (1.) This is the most obvious sense; (2.) It is everywhere distinguished from eating things sacrificed to idols, which itself was one form of idol worship; (3.) Historically it is well known that idol worship was associated with lewdness in its basest, most shameless forms.—The Lord gave this woman Jezebel some forewarnings of his judgments upon her and admonished her to repent of these great crimes, and also gave her space for such repentance, but in vain.

22. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

Here also the literal and most obvious sense is to be accepted. "I will cast her into a bed" should mean, I will bring upon her some terrible disease—and the store-house of God's retributions has never lacked such agencies of prostration, suffering, loathsome rottenness and a death of horrors. Remarkably the judgment came (as often) so in the line of the sin as perpetually to remind both herself and all who knew her *whose* hand sent this plague upon her, and *why*.—Her guilty partners in this crime could not escape great tribulation.

23. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

"Death" in such a connection means pestilence, mortal disease. Her sins go down with their heritage of curses upon her children; not only by a physical law from whose influence few if any escape, but by the righteous, moral retribution of the great moral Governor of the world. Such cases are not strictly retributive vengeance as to the children for their lascivious mother's crimes. As to the mother, they are retribution; as to the children, only calamity and perhaps discipline. In the proper sense of punishment, God will punish such children only for their own sins. See Ezek. 18, and my notes on that chapter.—All the churches shall know that I search the heart and that I will give to every one according to his works. My judgments on Jezebel will forcibly illustrate these great elements of my character and of my righteous, moral government.

24. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

25. But that which ye have *already*, hold fast till I come.

There were some in this church as yet uncontaminated. To them these verses pertain.—Remarkably this delusion and abomination appear here as a "doctrine" as well as a practice. On what grounds the doctrine rested, by what fallacies and lies it was supported, it might gratify our curiosity to know. As the case is, we only know that "the father of lies" never lacked sophistry and show of argument to give some plausibility to the most abominably wicked practices, and we must satisfy ourselves with the general fact without the specific illustration which this one case might add to other thousands already extant.—"Have not known" by experience "the depths of Satan, as men call them"—implying that those abominations of lewdness and idol worship went down to a depth of moral pollution below which Satan himself could not well sink—so deep that they could not be slandered by calling them "the depths of Satan."—"I will put upon you none other burden," *i. e.*, no extra trial or calamity *because of* the crimes of Jezebel and of her paramours—no other than you have had already. Whatever Christian stability you have, retain it firmly till I come.

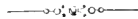
26. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

28. And I will give him the morning star.

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

Here the reward to the victor in this conflict is not (like those that precede it) taken directly from the closing chapters of this book, but from Ps. 2, where its primary reference is to the Messiah.—The appropriate comment on this sublimely magnificent promise is in my view best made in those other words of John: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be" (1 Eps. 3: 2). What more can we say of this promised "power over the nations;" of this "ruling them with a rod of iron;" of this wielding a power of such sort (in some unknown respect *such*) as Jesus has received from his Father? If this power be like the providential rule of the Messiah over the nations, I have no wisdom as yet for the answer of these questions: I do not find any revelation that answers them.—"I will give him the morning star" must be put in the same category. In Rev. 22: 16 Jesus pertinently says this of himself: "I am the bright and morning star." We accept this sublime imagery as most pertinent when applied to Him: of its application to his victorious human servants, what can we say? The answer lies among the unrevealed mysteries of infinite grace.



CHAPTER III.

Three letters to as many churches make up this chapter;—to Sardis (1-6); to Philadelphia (7-13); to Laodicea (14-22).

SARDIS.

1. And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Sardis, renowned in the age of Cyrus and of the fall of Babylon, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, the home of Cræsus, but now an utter desolation, impresses the modern traveler with a sense of the retributions of divine justice that the church nearest dead spiritually of the seven should be before us to-day conspicuous only for its sad and silent ruins!—For "the seven Spirits of God," see notes on 1: 4. It was every way pertinent that Jesus should present himself before this church in his exalted prerogative and office of sending forth the Holy Ghost. The subordinate agents also (the "seven stars" being the angels of the seven churches, 1: 20) are his servants.—The fearfully solemn and

specially significant declaration—"I know thy works," means here—I know how unsubstantial, deceptive, hypocritical, thy religion is. Thy spiritual life is but a name: in reality, as to most of thy nominal members, thou art only dead. The name they have before the world stands for the external only: the inward vital elements are mostly wanting. At the heart, death reigns.

2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

Some languishing graces still retained a perceptible vitality. Christ exhorts them to give most watchful attention to the nourishing and invigoration of these lest absolute death supervene and nothing be left but a mass of spiritual corruption.—The form of expression—"I have not found thy works perfect before God," is common in Hebrew in the sense—I have found them fearfully far from being perfect—really the very opposite of perfect before God. The closing thought, "*before God*," suggests that their standard of judging of their own piety had quite omitted this element—*God's view of it*—a fatal omission!

3. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. 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.

"How thou hast received and heard" the gospel; how it came to thee in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; how in those first experiences, the Holy Ghost wrought with power on some hearts and brought forth some fruits of true holiness. Recall those first experiences; hold fast whatever of them may yet remain, and *repent*; return to that first life and first love. Else I will come upon thee suddenly, as the thief comes by night with no forewarning. Their case was so bad, so offensive to God, there could be only the shortest delay of judgment—only the forbearance of one brief hour.

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.

"Even in Sardis," conceives of their church and city as being notoriously corrupt. Even there, amid such almost universal wickedness and moral pollution, a few, counted by individuals only, were yet undefiled. Remarkably they had lived in a place so filthy morally and their garments were yet unsoiled. What can not the grace of God do?—The closing promise takes its cast from this description of their character. They shall walk with me in white—those men who have withstood such temptations,

who have kept their garments without stain amid such surroundings—verily they are worthy to walk in white with their risen and glorified Redeemer!

5. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but 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.

Closing the letter in the usual form, viz., the reward promised to "him that overcometh," the drapery of the promise remains unchanged—"shall be clothed in white raiment" (see 19: 8). "The book of life" may be studied in 20: 12, 15, and 21: 27, and 13: 8. The last words come from the promise of Christ as recorded by Luke (12: 8); "Him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God."

PHILADELPHIA.

7. And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

This, of old the second city of Lydia, is still respectable among the inland cities of Asia Minor, said to have three thousand houses. —The tone of this epistle differs widely from either the one that next precedes or the one that follows it, for here the Lord found much to commend. —Among the descriptive points named by the Lord Jesus in this letter, the words "the holy" refer rather to what is assumed throughout chap. I than to any one expression. Every feature given there involves perfect holiness. —"He that is true," reminds us that this writer is the same John who wrote the gospel (14: 6, and 17: 3), and also the Epistle (5: 20); while "the key of David" can be nothing other or less than the regal power of the great Son of David which in Rev. 1: 18 is expressed in the phrase, "I have the keys of Hell and of Death;" meaning, I am the Arbiter of all the future destinies of men, having power to open and to shut the realm of the dead to whom I will, Death being only my servant, and my power being supreme. The corrected text, following the oldest authorities, gives the phrase thus: "I open, and no one *will* shut: I shut, and no one *will* open."

8. I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

As to the form of expression, this "open door" follows the preceding verse: "I have the key of David, opening (*i. e.*, the door) and none will shut," etc. But still the question remains, does the language in this verse contemplate an open door for Christian labor in this life, or an open door of entrance upon the better life to come? The language admits of either construction. It may be said that the preceding context favors its reference to the future world—the following context, to the present. I incline to accept the lead of the following context and assume its reference to an open field for Christian labor and usefulness, with however the implied idea that for those who work faithfully for Christ here, entering into the doors he opens and toiling in true fidelity till he calls them away, the other door will be opened for an abundant entrance into his everlasting kingdom. He who has power to open heaven and hell can also control all the present agencies of providence and can open doors for Christian work before all his true servants. Therefore let such servants rejoice in all their toil and labors, for their reward is sure.—"Kept my word," I take to include both preserving it in its purity and obeying it in honest sincerity and faithfulness. Error and vice were in those days (as often) sustained as a doctrine; hence the pertinence of the commendation, "kept my word."

9. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which 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.

Here are the same pernicious teachers whom we saw (2: 9) in Smyrna, making unbounded pretensions to be first and best among the worshippers of God, but being in truth only a "synagogue of Satan."—Their presence in so many of these seven churches testifies that when these letters to the seven churches and this book of Revelation were written, this form of heresy, this antagonism between Judaism and Christianity, was still in its strength, and consequently, beyond all reasonable doubt, that Jerusalem had not yet fallen.—Our passage declares that God would give his faithful servants in this city such tokens of his presence and such demonstrations of his power and love as should bring these proud and false Jews low at their feet, to acknowledge his favor to them. This teaching pledges to all God's faithful servants in every age that he will appear in their behalf to give them signal success and ultimate honor—will "show that he has loved them."

10. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

“Kept the word” should have the same meaning here as in v. 8. “The word of my patience” must mean my injunction to stand fast even at the cost of suffering affliction. “Patience” has the old sense of *suffering*, and refers here to the pre- intimations which Christ had often given that his faithful servants must encounter suffering for his name. “They will cast you out of the synagogue; yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16: 2). “Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3: 12).—“I will *keep* thee,” etc., plays upon the twofold sense of the word “keep.” Because they had kept his word in the sense of a sacred treasure to be preserved in its purity and a rule of life to be obeyed with unflinching and unswerving fidelity, therefore Christ will keep them from all the harm which Satan had plotted to bring upon them.—His language implies that a fierce and wide-spread persecution was about to come upon all the churches for their stern and searching trial.

11. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

“I come quickly.” But this coming can not be the final one for the last judgment, because that coming was then certainly remote, and Jesus never indicated the time when it should occur (Mark 13: 32). For reasons more fully given in my notes on 1: 7, it may be supposed to refer somewhat definitely to Christ’s coming to destroy Jerusalem, considered as the first great persecuting anti-Christian power, the general thought being—I am about to make special manifestations of my presence and power in retributive vengeance on the present persecutors of my people, and also for the salvation of my faithful friends.—This coming will be an hour of crisis and of stern conflict: therefore hold fast thy profession; stand firmly for Jesus; a few days of terrible struggle—and then, if faithful, thy crown is made sure; but one hour’s apostasy will be at the cost of thy crown!

12. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* 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.

“A pillar in the temple of my God” is thoroughly a Jewish conception, beautifully pertinent here however since it involves the several ideas of a permanent fixture; an ornamental and essential part of the structure; and of a tablet upon which shall be

inscribed the name of God, the name of his heavenly city, and "my new name"—that of Jesus the Conqueror. The reader will notice the abundant allusions to the main features of chap. 21: "The new Jerusalem which came down from God out of heaven," etc.—Of this wealth of honor and glory laid up for the faithful servants of Jesus—those especially who stand firm through the scathing fires of persecution, it is but little that we can say in detail, for "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." That it defies all illustration by models of earthly splendor; that it will surpass all our present conceptions; that it will utterly distance our highest imagination—so much is most abundantly plain. Language and symbol labor to set it forth, yet with an apparent consciousness of inability to do it justice. Let him that hath an ear hear these words of glorious promise, and let his soul be fired thereby to unlimited endurance of toil or pain or shame for Jesus.

LAODICEA.

14. And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

As to these descriptive epithets (taken substantially from 1: 5) 'the Amen' is explained in the clause that follows—"the faithful and true Witness," *i. e.*, He who came from heaven to bear witness to the truth of God, to reveal God to man truthfully, with no imperfection, no admixture of error. Inasmuch as one of the most solemn responsibilities of his persecuted people was the bearing of a faithful testimony for God in the face of fire and death, there was special pertinence in placing their own living Christ before them as *the* ever faithful Witness.—"The beginning of the creation of God" has been explained by some to mean, the Being first created by God, the eldest among all created existences. The fatal objection to this is that it assumes Christ to have been created, while the scriptures represent him as the Uncreated One, eternally existent, and really the Creator of all things. (See especially John 1: 1-3.)—Moreover, some take the word "beginning" in the sense of the *author* of existence, the First Cause of beginning to be, to all who are created. The objection to this lies, not against the doctrine it would teach, but against such a usage of the word, this usage lacking adequate support. Another meaning may be given to the leading word by a well established usage and with a result which is in perfect harmony with the uniform tenor of the scriptures, *viz.*, that of *Princee, Supreme Lord*. In the passages where this word (*arche*) has this meaning, our English version translates it by the word "principalities." (See Eph. 1: 21, and 3: 10, and Col. 1: 16, and 2: 10, and Rom. 8: 38.) These cases show conclusively that the word is applied to beings of great power and of high authority—real princees. So is Jesus the supreme Princee of the created universe. It was pertinent to say

this to the church of Laodicea in precisely its circumstances at that moment. There can be no room for doubt that this is what Jesus meant to say.

15. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

While water, either cold or hot, is agreeable to the taste and not offensive to the stomach, it is a well known fact that lukewarm water is distasteful, offensive, nauseating. Upon this fact, the figure before us rests. The main point of inquiry in this passage is—How far shall we carry this figure: how much shall we make of it? Does heat in water precisely represent fervor of feeling in religion so that we may carry the analogy entirely through and infer from these words (1.) that God loves the most ardent souls, of the highest possible tone of fervid emotion; (2.) that he also loves the other extreme—the cold, frigid souls—even as men who labor in the summer's heat love cold ice water; but (3.) that the men of medium temperament, the men not hot and not cold, are loathsome to him? Whoever shall press the figure to this extent will find reason to recoil from some of its points as against both scripture and common sense. It is much better not to press a figure of speech to more service than it was made to perform; and quite important moreover to see the precise point of comparison between the material image and the spiritual reality it would illustrate.—Guided by the nature of the figure and by the context, we reach this result, viz., that the thing condemned is not a medium tone of truly religious emotion, but is a *proud self-conceit*, a self-sufficiency which is real emptiness and vanity—which supposing itself rich, is miserably poor, etc. This sort of piety Jesus declares to be loathsome and nauseating to him, even as lukewarm water is to the human stomach. This is all. There is no attempt to run an analogy between heat in water and heat in religious emotion; there is no purpose of pushing this analogy through and making it bear at all possible points, or as the phrase is, “go on all fours.” Figures of speech are too useful to be so badly abused as they sometimes are (shall we not say) especially those found in the Bible.—“I would thou wert cold or hot” may be construed to mean, I would that thou were any thing else rather than lukewarm. Nothing else can be so loathsome to me as your vain self-conceit.

17. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire,

that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.

“Rich,” “increased with goods,” having “need of nothing”—is said not of earthly wealth but of spiritual and heavenly. To suppose these phrases to refer to the merchant’s “goods”—to the supply of our physical wants—would carry with it the doctrine that God counsels us to buy of him “gold,” the literal article; and “white raiment”—not stainless piety, but spotless cloth—all which is only a glaring absurdity!—The original makes the words for “wretched,” “miserable,” specially expressive by prefixing the article—Knowest not that thou art *the* wretched one, *the* miserable one—above all others, by special preëminence. The sentiment is plain: dismiss this vain and loathsome self-conceit; anoint thine eyes with eye-salve so that thou canst see the things that are—thyself as thou art seen by God’s eye. Then having emptied thy heart of this delusive self-conceit, come to Jesus to be fed and filled with his bread of life; come in thy conscious nakedness to be clothed; receive Jesus in all his proffered relations—thy wisdom, thy righteousness, thy sanctification, thy redemption (1 Cor. 1: 30; “all in all;” so shall it be well with thee.

19. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

It is because I love thee that I now seek to put thy real case before thine eyes, and shall proceed by discipline and chastisement to every hopeful effort to bring thee to myself. All whom I truly love, I labor thus to save. If I find them puffed with vain conceit, I spare no rebuke and no *chastisement*, if so I may save them.

20. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

If we construe this verse in harmony with the preceding context, we shall get a doubly forcible and precious sense from it—thus: Behold, I come even to you of Laodicea; conceited, proud though many of you are, yet I come with my riches, my white raiment, my eye-salve; and I knock at your door, and there I stand yet a while waiting for admittance. If any man of you shall hear my voice as in the rebuke just now spoken, and shall open his heart’s door and make me welcome, coming for such a purpose and with such love for his soul, then I will indeed come in unto that man, and I will sup with him and he shall sup with me. A feast of joy, as when the prodigal returns and once more sits down with his loving father in the old and now joyous home! So much Christ has said to inspire hope in the darkest bosom—so much to

press himself upon these conceited Laodiceans, that they may receive all riches and all joy from his hand.

21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

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

To the overcoming one, blessings of surpassing richness are promised. What more could the Savior promise than this?—a seat jointly shared with himself on his own throne! "Come up and sit with me in the glory of my kingdom!" How can we lift our thought to measure the glory of such a promise? What shall we think of the love and of the longing to save that prompted it? What of the guilt involved in treating it with cold indifference, or worse, with stolid rejection and contempt?

Thus close these wonderful letters to the seven churches. Were words ever spoken more full of faithfulness to the souls of men; more full of appreciation for all that is praiseworthy; more full of love for all classes; more fraught with watchful and wise solicitude for their stability and endurance in the terrible conflict through which they were so soon to pass?



CHAPTER IV.

It was at once a most sublime and a most practical feature in the prophetic visions vouchsafed to John in Patmos that so large a part of its scenes were laid *in heaven* rather than *on earth*. The stand-point of the seer was there, not here. "A door was opened in heaven," *i. e.*, a door opening *into* heaven; the very door of entrance to the heavenly world; and the first thing he heard was *that trumpet-voice* previously heard (1: 10), saying, "Come up hither; I will show thee things which are soon to come to pass." It was ineffably sublime to see from this lofty stand-point how the events of earth appear—to see the moving forces that work out human destiny as they emanate from the Great Central Power on the throne of the Universe; to see where the lightnings are forged, and to look into the great magazines of fire and storm and plague and death from which God's messengers bring forth his bolts of vengeance to hurl down upon the strongholds of his proud foes on the earth below. It reminds us of the poetic conceptions of Pagan mythology which constructed vast magazines, where the storm-king held the winds imprisoned, but drew the bars and let the gates fly open at his pleasure, that the blasts might rush forth,

and the fierce winds howl, and the stricken mariners be at their wit's end; and yet other magazines for the lightning, the hail and the thunder, where the bolts were forged, and the tempests also, that gather blackness and pour abroad their terrible desolations. Somewhat such, only higher and grander far, were the scenes laid before the exile of Patmos when this door into heaven was opened, and he was called up thither to see visions of the great central throne, and of its august surroundings; to see where the ministering angels of divine judgments receive their commission; to witness the worship and to listen to the songs that ascribe immortal honor to the great Creator and Lord of all, and to Him who hath redeemed the saints of earth with his own blood.—These views of scenes in heaven, shown in their relations to things on earth in the nearer future, were not only sublime and grand, and therefore most thrilling, but they were in their nature and bearings intensely *practical*. We must not forget that John the seer is an exile amid scenes of wild and sad desolation, and that he wrote to his companions in tribulation, then under the pressure or the fear of deadly persecution. Now it is every thing to human hearts throbbing with personal fear and quivering with solicitude for the imperiled cause of their Master, to know that there is a most intense and earnest sympathy felt in their case by all the vast and glorious populations of the heavenly world, reaching to the very throne of the Almighty.—Those heavenly scenes bore witness to John with mighty voice that *there* were the *elements of power*—of power before which the mightiest forces of Jewish or Roman persecution seemed infinitely puny and insignificant. It was no small thing for the churches of Asia to see the demonstration of this great fact as these visions brought it home to the heart of John.—But those visions revealed not power only or chiefly, but a wondrous and most tender *sympathy*. All heaven seemed to gather round the book of human destiny, at first so closely sealed from view, as if the future of beings dear to their heart were written there, yet with unwavering confidence that the Lion of the tribe of Judah was competent to open it and read, and also competent as well to wield the power and the wisdom requisite to bring forth results most of all glorious and blessed for his people. Then as the first four of those seals were successively broken, with what kindness did the four living Ones summon the symbolic horses to the prophet's view with the word of command—"Come!" Moreover it was one of the most thrilling manifestations of Heaven's sympathy with the martyrs, that on the opening of the fifth seal John saw under the altar the souls of the martyred dead, and heard their prayerful cry and also that touching answer thereto: Rest yet for a little season; a few more must fall as ye have fallen; but Zion's King will surely conquer and Zion's foes must fall! So all along, the angels go forth with willing soul and tireless wing on every mission, whether of deliverance to God's people or of judgment on their foes. Every new scene in heaven heightens the as-

surance that God's suffering people on earth are remembered there with tenderest solicitude and most yearning sympathy.—Then, moreover, those open visions of heaven disclose the blessedness of the righteous dead who have entered into rest. You see their thronging thousands; you hear their enraptured songs; in plainest, simplest words the voice from the upper temple proclaims them "blessed;" and as if to crown all, the very hand of the Infinite Father himself wipes every tear of their eyes away!

Thus with admirable, most pertinent and forcible adaptation do these scenes in the opened heaven minister to the moral wants of the persecuted people of God on earth. It was not to amuse them with splendid pictures, and not to kindle poetic fire in their imagination for the mere warmth and joy thereof that this door into the world above was set open; but to lift their thought above the murderous edicts of tyrants, and their souls above all fear of prison, torture and death; to inspire them with the Christian heroism of faith and love and hope of a blessed immortality.—Now coupling this conception of an open heaven and its wondrous revelations with that sublime manifestation of the human person of Jesus depicted in the first chapter, we can not but admire the adaptation of these prophetic visions to the end they had in view. How impressive upon John and his first readers must these manifestations have been—first that of Jesus in his glory in Patmos; next that of the open heaven! Let us not overlook the wonderfully quickening power of such views upon that *faith* which makes unseen things real; which becomes "the evidence of things not seen," and which thus gives the victory over the world and all its forces.

The chapter gives us the prophet's first introduction to the scenes and personages of the heavenly world. In succession we have the opened door and the voice calling him up thither (v. 1); the throne and the appearance of him who sat thereon (vs. 2, 3); the twenty-four seats and as many elders sitting (v. 4); the sounds from the throne and the seven lamps of fire (v. 5); the four living ones seen, described, and their song of adoration (6-8); coincident with their song is that of the twenty-four elders (vs. 9-11).

1. After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

"After this" [Greek, "meta tanta"], *soon* after, in close connection with what precedes, as in 1: 19 and also in the close of this verse.—"A door opened in heaven" is more precisely a door through which when opened one might look *into heaven*. He first saw this opened door, and then heard that trumpet voice, designated here as "that first voice," heard before (chap. 1: 10), in-

viting him to come up and enter. He does not mean the first voice compared with the many afterward heard in heaven, but that one which he heard first of all, as in chapter I.—In this open heaven he was to witness scenes which would reveal events soon to occur on the earth.

2. And immediately I was in the Spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne.

3. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

“I was in the Spirit”—as in this book elsewhere (1: 10, and 17: 3, and 21: 10), always without the Greek article and therefore not precisely in *the* Spirit, but rather *in Spirit*—which means, not in the disembodied state, nor merely “in the Holy Ghost” in the usual sense of Christian experience (*c. g.*, Rom. 8: 9, and Eph. 6: 18, and Jude 20), but in a state of spiritual ecstasy, in special spiritual relations to the great agent of prophetic vision.—“A throne set in heaven” imitates Dan. 7: 9, where we should not translate “thrones cast down” [overturned], but thrones firmly set, located, as a seat is placed for a friend to occupy.—One sat upon this throne whose brilliancy and glory could be but dimly represented by that of the most precious stones. A rainbow encircled this ineffably glorious throne.—It is not said in definite words that He who sat upon this throne was the Infinite God; yet the homage rendered to Him (4: 8-11, and 5: 13), with numerous other circumstances, leave us in no doubt as to the fact.—We may well admire the wisdom that forbore to set forth any *form* or likeness of Him who sat on this central throne. The genius and scope of this heavenly vision demanded that the divine Father should be *visible*. It was by an admirable precaution against materialistic and consequently debasing views of God that the representation gives only so much as we find here—color, splendor, but no *form* which would naturally lead the mind to a material representation of the infinite God.

4. And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

Twenty-four “seats,” but in Greek, *thrones*, yet of course lesser and subordinate thrones, compared with the great central one.—Here we are first introduced to the twenty-four elders (“presbyters”), clothed in white and wearing crowns of gold. Who are they? What do they represent?—Any thorough investigation of this point must take into account all the cases in which they come before us in this book, viz., in 1: 10, 11, and 5: 5, 6, 8-11, 14, and 7: 11, 13-17, and 11: 16-18, and 11: 3, and 19: 4.

(1.) Plainly they are not impersonal but personal—*i. e.*, they do not represent merely abstract attributes or qualities of some unknown being, but they represent some order of conscious, voluntary beings; for they offer intelligent worship (4: 10, 11, and 5: 8-10, and 7: 11, 12, etc.). They manifest special interest in the prophet and condescend to explain to him the meaning of what he sees (7: 13-17). These it will be seen are mainly the aspects in which they appear in this book.

(2.) The question being now narrowed down to the choice between human and superhuman beings, I judge that we must accept the former, especially because they say in their song to the Lamb—"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (5: 8-11). This could not have been said and sung by any superhuman orders of created beings according to any right in our Bible. Nor is it out of harmony with this view that they appear "having golden vials full of odors which are the prayers of saints" (5: 8). Let us suppose them to be ideal representatives of the glorified saints in heaven, introduced into these visions to show the prophet and his readers what sphere the holy from earth are filling in heaven; what sympathy they still retain with their suffering brethren yet in the flesh; what access they have to the throne above and what influence there; also what their employments are. So will the significance of this representation appear in all points pertinent and instructive. Let us also notice the sympathy manifested by one of them in kindly calling John's attention to the white-robed ones (7: 13), and in his explanation (vs. 14-17)—so admirably adapted to comfort the imperiled martyrs and so appropriate as coming from one who represented the glorified saints already in heaven.

5. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

The "lightnings, thunderings and voices" seem in this case to have been designed to make a general impression rather than to bear any special significance. Naturally they must awaken attention and inspire awe. They do not appear to reveal any thing definite. (See also 8: 5, and 16: 18.)—As to the "seven lamps of fire," see notes on 1: 4-6.—By a law of inexorable necessity, all symbols shown in vision must come down to material objects however much it may seem to degrade the grand and magnificent idea. No forms of matter wrought into symbol can possibly do justice to the qualities and powers of the Infinite God. These seven lamps of fire must not be thought of simply as so many chandeliers in an ancient cathedral. We must rather think of them as illuminating and irradiating the throne of heaven with splendor and glory such as no mortal eye could bear, but set forth

here under the same general symbol which represents the church on earth (1: 20) because both are agencies for diffusing the true light of God. The divine Spirit has no function more high or glorious than that of revealing the true God to his creatures.

6. And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were* four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

7. And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle.

8. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

I judge that the words "sea" and "glass" give not the reality but only the appearance. They are fine images of splendor, beauty and glory.—New persons are introduced here to us, called unfortunately by our translators "beasts." It is simply unaccountable that they should translate this Greek word (*zoon*) "beast," and then another Greek word (*therion*, in chap 13: 1-4, 11, 12, etc.) by the same English word, *beast*. The latter is a savage wild beast, fierce, ugly, formidable, and foul—a fit symbol of a great evil persecuting power. But the word now before us means precisely *a living one*, endowed preëminently with life—the noblest of all created endowments. These four living ones are imitated in part from Ezek. 1, and in part from Isa. 6. From Ezekiel they have their name, "living creatures;" their number, four; their symbolic type, *i. e.*, the animal forms that are grouped and combined to represent the noblest qualities known in the animal world—the lion, the ox or young bullock [better than "calf"], the human face, the flying eagle.—From Isa. 6 they have the six wings and in part the very words of their song, "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of Hosts"—the "Jehovah" of Isaiah being translated here into the phrase—"which was, and is, and is to come." (See Notes on 1: 4.)—It is a point of some interest to reach if possible the true idea of these four living ones. *What are they and what do they represent?*—The data upon which to base an intelligent, reliable judgment must be found in what is said of them in this book and in the sources (Ezekiel and Isaiah) whence these characters seem to be taken by imitation. The passages in this book, other than in this chapter, are 5: 6, 8, 11, 14, and 6: 1, 3, 5-7, and 7: 11, and 14: 3, and 15: 7, and 19: 4. From these passages we learn that they are very near the central throne; are intimately associated with the twenty-four elders, yet take precedence of them; unite with them in adoration and praise; call the

attention of the prophet to the revelations made at the opening of the first four seals; one of them gives to the seven angels the seven vials full of the wrath of God (15: 7). Such are their employments, as in this book.—In Ezek I, I take the four living creatures to be symbolic representations of the providential government and agencies of God, considered especially as shaping the history and the retributive destiny of nations. Consequently they are not personal but impersonal—mere illustrations, presented in symbol, of the works of the great divine Agent and Lord of all. But in Isaiah they are manifestly personal and not impersonal. They act, they speak, they cry one to another. Consequently we must take them to be created, sinless beings of a high if not the very highest order.—In the case before us our choice must lie between the usage of Ezekiel and the usage of Isaiah. Are they, as in Ezekiel, impersonations of God's providential forces; or, as in Isaiah, veritable persons, of the noblest order of sinless beings?—I accept the latter view, because these are obviously conscious intelligent existences, performing acts and manifesting qualities that must imply distinct personality.—It may be thought by some that their uniting (5: 8-10) with the twenty-four elders in the "new song"—"Thou art worthy to take the book and to open its seals, for thou *hast redeemed us,*" etc., must imply that they too as well as the elders are from the redeemed race of men and represent them.—Over against this inference I suggest that when the four living ones *lead* the song (as in 4: 9-11) its theme is creation, not redemption, and that in this "new song" (5: 9) the twenty-four elders *lead* and give shape to the sentiment and the language, while the living ones unite from sympathy with their younger brethren (the "elders") and not because they themselves have been redeemed by Jesus' blood. This sympathy between the loftiest of God's archangels and the eldership which stands for the redeemed of earth is wonderfully beautiful, precious, and let us not omit to say, *pertinent* to the great moral purpose of the book, viz., to set before the persecuted saints of John's age (and of every age) the sympathy felt in their case by all the hierarchies of the heavenly world—a sympathy which manifests itself not only in their unison of heart and voice in the great choral songs of heaven for creation and redemption, but in celebrating the progressive steps of God's righteous retributive agencies as they work out in prospect and in fact the deliverance of his imperiled people, the ruin of their persecutors, and the final triumph of Christ's kingdom over all the nations.—In regard to the designation of these four beings nearest the throne as *living ones*, I suggest that it may express their tireless energy, "They rest not day and night;" and possibly also the fact that (unlike the saints from our earth) they have never known death. Their life-power never wanes—never has been eclipsed; mortality to them is all unknown.—The Sinaitic manuscript, one of the oldest known, remarkably repeats the word "holy" (v. 8) not merely three times but eight.

9. And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

10. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Here we have the mutual sympathy and union of the four living ones and of the twenty-four elders in this first specimen song of heaven.—The improved text makes the verbs, "give" (v. 9) and "fall" (v. 10), both future, the sense being that *whenever* the living ones *shall* strike this song, the twenty-four elders *will* fall prostrate, worship, and cast their crowns at his feet in perfect and most blessed sympathy.—This song honors and extols the Infinite Lord as Supreme Creator, declaring that out of his *good will* ["pleasure"], because of his supreme desire to bless with happiness, he has created sentient beings. They exist by virtue of his creative mandate.



CHAPTER V.

The great feature of this chapter is the book of destiny seen in heaven (v. 1); the question, Who can open and read it (vs. 2-4); settled at length by the announcement that the Lion of Judah has conquered and will open and read it (v. 5). He appears in form as a Lamb slain and takes the book (vs. 6, 7); whereupon the joy of heaven breaks forth in glorious song; the living ones and the elders first leading (vs. 8-10), and then the myriads of angels come in with the grand chorus (vs. 11-14).

1. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals.

Unquestionably this "book" is in imitation of Ezek. 2, and is the *book* of the future destinies of the church and of her fortunes as related to her persecuting enemies. From the fact that this prophecy fills a book [scroll] and consists of seven successive sections each fastened with its own seal, we can infer nothing as to the duration of the periods of time which it covers, or as to the point where its prophetic events shall commence their fulfillment. Light on these points must be sought elsewhere.—The reader

will notice that this book is seen in the right hand of the great Being on the central throne. This corresponds with the statement (1: 1), "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him."

2. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3. And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

These scenes served to awaken attention and to excite interest to its highest pitch.—"Worthy to open," in the sense of *competent*, capable, coupled perhaps with the idea of being honored of God to make this revelation. "To look thereon" were better read, *therein*, to look *into it* to read its revelations of human destiny.

4. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

The prophet feels deeply, as one whose heart is keenly alive to the fortunes of Christ's church and kingdom, whose hopes of seeing some foreshadowings of her future have been raised by a sight of the book, but are now suspended and liable to be quenched in darkness if no one can be found to open it and to read. One of the twenty-four elders (heavenly representatives of the earthly church) comes to him in warm sympathy, with the welcome tidings that one is found competent to loose those seals and to reveal the contents of the book. It is the risen Messiah, called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah"—the lion being the recognized and well-known symbol of this tribe (see Gen. 49: 9, 10); called also "the Root of David," *i. e.*, the *root-shoot*, the fresh growth springing up from the root and constituting the new tree—a turn of thought taken from Isa. 11: 1, 10. He "hath prevailed" (Greek, *hath conquered*) so as to open the book. He has proved himself worthy and has received the honor of making this revelation.—The question has been raised whether in the state of prophetic ecstasy the prophet still retained his personal consciousness and identity, *i. e.*, was still himself. Plainly in this case the seer of Patmos is still the same John, the anxious loving father of his spiritual children, the careful pastor of his flock, the faithful disciple whose heart trembles for the ark of God and watches with deepest interest the revelations of Zion's nearer future.

6. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

And now the vision opens to bring the risen Messiah before him. There, "in the midst of the throne," as near as possible to the great central Being—probably the thought is—jointly sharing with him the honors of that throne [sunthronos], and immediately encircled by the four living ones and the twenty-four elders, stood One in appearance as a Lamb that had been slain—just before seen as the Lion of Judah's tribe, but now the Lamb of Sacrifice "who taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29). The genius of illustrative symbolism labors to represent his perfect power and perfect intelligence, and hence the Lamb has seven horns [supreme power], and seven eyes [perfect intelligence, knowledge, truth]. These eyes, somewhat imitating Zechariah (Zech. 3: 9, and 4: 10), are thought of as representing, not knowledge in the abstract, or perhaps we might say, knowledge *in repose*, but knowledge, the very light of God, *sent forth* in and by the glorious special Agent of saving light and converting truth—the Holy Ghost. No view of the functions of Jesus is full unless it includes his sending forth the Spirit as the great Revealer of God, acting in a sense subordinate to himself, really taking up his own unfinished work and bearing it onward to glorious completion and triumphant success in the enlightening, conversion and salvation of the world.—We may perhaps account it an imperfection in this symbolism that what appears at first as the seven eyes of the Lamb becomes so many spirits sent forth abroad into all the earth; but we may well bear in mind that when applied to represent the Great God, and especially the ineffable relations of the blessed Trinity, the highest efforts of symbolism must prove imperfect. The marvel in this case is that the symbols are so wonderfully expressive, and that the points they present are so remarkably in harmony with the great central truths of the gospel scheme touching the points in hand.—I need scarcely add that something must be put to the account of the influence of like symbols in the earlier prophets—*c. g.*, Zechariah.

7. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.

The scene progresses: the Lamb of the heavenly world advances and takes the book of destiny. A thrill of joy pervades

the exalted personages of heaven; first, those nearest the throne—the four living ones and the twenty-four elders. Each of them has his harp, in readiness for outbursting song, and also “golden vials full of odors” [incense] which represent the prayers of saints. These vials—prayers—were specially pertinent in the hands of the elders, who appear throughout as the special representatives of the church on earth. At this point in the progress of these scenes the elders seem to *lead*. The living ones are with them (it would seem) under the law of heavenly sympathy.—But let us not fail to notice that the prayers of the church below have very much to do with the counsels of the great throne above and with the partial revelation now to be made of those counsels. Many a prayer of earnestness amounting to agony has been wrung from trembling, tortured hearts amid the scenes or the fear of bloody violence. The incense of those prayers, treasured in golden vials, now goes up before the throne. In answer thereto, the Lamb has taken the book of destiny to reveal some words of comfort touching God’s judgments on his incorrigible foes, and his deliverance for his faithful friends.

9. 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 out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

“A new song”—the old song, celebrating the wisdom, power and love of God in creation having been given above (4: 9-11). The “new song” celebrates not only the fact of the atoning sacrifice—the “Lamb slain”—but the now pending victories of the Lamb over his enemies and the triumphs of his kingdom on the earth.—The logic of this song should be noted. “Thou art worthy to take and open the book because thou wast slain and hast redeemed thy people even by thy blood.” That wondrous sacrifice, never to be forgotten in earth or heaven, justifies and demands the awarding to Jesus of the most exalted honors. So Paul has said (Phil. 2: 6-11). Because Jesus “made himself of no reputation; took the form of a servant; became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross—*therefore* God hath highly exalted him and given him a name above every name.”—This song celebrates the twofold work wrought by Christ for his people; (1) redemption; (2) exaltation to glory. “Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood;” thou hast also “made us unto our God kings and priests.” The first precedes, but the other follows. Neither can be omitted.—As to the more precise reading and sense of the text, it may be noted that in the words—“Hast redeemed us” (v. 9), the Alexandrine manuscript omits “us” altogether. But the other most ancient manuscript (namely the Sinaitic) retains

it. The passage seems lame and unfinished without it. But in v. 10 there is a general concurrence of the best authorities (headed by the Alexandrine and Sinaitic) in giving "*them*" instead of "*us*," the sense being that the song purposely includes not only the already ransomed in heaven but all the then struggling ones of earth and indeed all who should through future ages "believe on Jesus through their word." These authorities favor also the reading, "unto *their* God." Also many say, a *kingdom* (instead of "kings"), and some, a *priesthood* (instead of "priests"). The reading "*kingdom*" might assume that they are subjects, not kings, constituting Christ's promised glorious kingdom. If we accept the reading "kings," we must still hold Christ supreme, and give to this word as applied to his people only the sense of exalted honor, dignity, reward, analogous to his own.—Precisely how much and what is meant by the words "*on the earth*," who can tell? I take them to mean this at least—that Christ's people shall not be crushed down and savagely ruled over on the earth forever. The long prevalent course of things shall yet be reversed; the former oppressors become the crushed ones, and the former oppressed, the exultant conquerors. (See Isa. 14: 2.)

11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12. Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

In the outer circle of the heavenly hosts appear now the angelic throng in numbers almost without number. In their song all forms of honor, power and glory are ascribed to the Lamb that was slain; yet they do not say, "slain *for us*." Still they love the song and pour out their souls in most exultant strains. These are things which another apostle has said "the angels desire to look into," and here they are anticipating the opening glories of Messiah's conflict and victory, rejoicing that One so worthy is to wear so nobly the highest honors of the heavenly world.

13. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

14. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshiped him that liveth forever and ever.

If the intelligent beings in the universe have not been all included previously, this comprehensive description must take in all—all the holy ones, all save the rebels in hell. All these holy ones are of one heart to ascribe blessing, honor, glory, power in equal strains, with indiscriminating praise, (1.) to Him that sitteth on the throne, and (2.) to the Lamb forever and ever. No question as to the supreme divinity of Jesus Christ is ever raised around that highest throne of the universe. No discordant note is heard there, making the slightest discrimination between the infinite honor ascribed to God, and the equally infinite honor given to the Lamb that was slain, his own eternal Son.—To all this the four living ones respond, “*Amen.*” And the twenty-four elders again fall prostrate and worship.—The best authorities (Sinaitic, Alexandrine and others) omit “*him that liveth forever and ever.*” This avoids the difficulty which might be felt from the appearance of discriminating between the Father and the Son. Was the clause interpolated in some later manuscripts to make such a distinction? or was it omitted by some to obviate it? The evidence is strong for its omission.



CHAPTER VI.

The first six of the seven seals are opened in their order, and the prophet describes what he saw and records what he heard in each case.

1. And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

2. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

3. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

4. And there went out another horse *that was red*: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

5. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and *see* thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

7. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

8. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

The first four of the seven seals have many points in common; I therefore group them together. As the Lamb opened them one after another, the four living ones successively summoned a symbolic horse to "Come." The best authorities omit from the text "and see."—On the opening of each of these four seals, the central figure seen in the picture was a *horse*, but varying in color: in the first, white; in the second, red; in the third, black; and in the fourth, pale. The rider on the first carried the bow—a war-weapon; a crown was given him, and he went forth to conquer. He is a symbol of *victory*.—To the second there was given a great sword, and his power was to take peace from the land, and that men should kill one another. His mission is *war*.—The third rider carries a pair of balances (scales for weighing accurately); and the voice heard in explanation of this symbol said, "A measure of wheat" [proximately, a quart] "for a penny" [the price of a day's labor]; and a charge "not to hurt the oil and the wine." Scarcity and famine are the meaning of this symbol.—The rider on the pale horse had his very name upon his brow: he is *Death*, and Hades follows in his train. They go forth to kill—with sword, hunger, pestilence and wild beasts—to the extent of one-fourth part of the people of the *land*, for in all these cases we are to give the word rendered "earth" its more restricted and yet rather common sense, *land*; *i. e.*, the country had in view, which in the case of Jewish writers was their own Palestine. This was to them "*the land*."—It admits of no reasonable doubt that these diverse colored horses are imitated from Zech. 1 and 6. The horses of Zech. 1: 8-11 have riders, coming in symbol from the Persian post-horses, and are explorers, scouts (using this military term in none but an honorable sense), for they traverse the earth to observe the state of it. They report every thing quiet and at rest. They represent the exploring agencies of God's providence—his never-ceasing supervision of the affairs of nations—a prerequisite to the administration of justice and retribution.—The vision of Zech. 6 presents chariot horses who go forth, not to explore, but to avenge, to punish, to visit retribution upon the guilty nations whose oppressions of God's people had in-

eurred his wrath. So v. 8 signifies. See my notes on the passage. —As to the definite significance of the scenes presented on the opening of these first four seals, it would seem that there can be no reason for doubt. *Conquest, War, Famine, Death* are written on their very face. The things said conspire with the things shown to make this significance so far entirely plain.—But in the special application of these symbols to actual history, locating in *place* and in *time* the events predicted, commentators have disagreed almost endlessly. I do not propose to distract (or to amuse) the reader with these discordant and most diverse opinions. Suffice it that the majority of English authors have taken their starting point—the opening of the first seal—far on in time from the date of the writing, two or three centuries, more or less; and then have assumed that each successive seal covered its own section of history to the extent of some two, three, or four centuries, thus spreading the symbols of this chapter (the first six seals) over many hundreds of years—in some of these schemes of interpretation nearly or quite to the end of the world. The edition of the American Bible Society, now lying before me, said to be “without note or comment,” gives the contents of this chapter thus: “The opening of the seals in their order and what followed thereupon, *containing a prophecy to the end of the world.*” —It is simply inevitable that commentators who launch off in this way should diverge from each other in their course almost without limit. The landmarks given in this book they chiefly disregard, being careful only to “bring up” at the Millennium and the end of the world either once at the close of the book, or twice, the first being in this case at the end of chap. II, and then to spread out the prophecy over the intervening ages, touching such events as may best suit their individual preferences, history being explored to find something analogous to these symbols, and each man judging of the importance of historic events, not at all by their relations to John or to his first readers, but by their apparent magnitude as seen from each commentator’s own stand-point.—I hardly need say to my readers that I have not the least confidence in such methods of interpreting the book of Revelation, nor indeed any other book ever written. Those who have read attentively my general introduction will understand why. At this point I must briefly give my views of the prophetic application of these symbols and the grounds on which they rest.

1. These four sets of symbols (briefly called these four seals) describe, not four different and distant periods of time, but one period—one cluster of events. They combine to represent one historic period—are parts of one whole. It is not war in one age of the world; famine in another; death and carnage in another; but war, famine, and death in dread combination, all conspiring to afflict and plague the men of some one generation. For, these things *naturally go together*. You can not have the white horse of victory and conquest through the “bow” without war; you can not have the red horse of war without having also the black

horse, famine, and the pale horse, death, in his immediate train. —Then moreover this view corresponds with the significance of these symbols in the original source from which they came. Zechariah's horses with riders (chap. 1) and his horses with chariots (chap. 6) each in their place are a unit in significance. No sensible man (so far as I know) ever thought of spreading out these symbols to designate each its own long age of history—each its own distinct and independent set of events. Why then should such a method be adopted in the case of these same symbols when used by John?—Moreover I am forbidden to spread out these symbols over ten centuries or even one, by the positive and conclusive limitations fixed by Jesus Christ himself—saying, "things which must *shortly* come to pass;" "for the time is *at hand*." (1: 1, 3, and 22: 6, 10.)—Still further, the scenes at the opening of the fifth seal must have been understood by John and his first readers as referring to their own martyred brethren and to the bloody men who had taken their lives—scenes therefore of that very age and not of ages a thousand years distant.—And yet further, the scenes of the seventh seal developed in chap. 11 are definitely located near yet shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem and of its temple, and therefore these preceding seals must have their historic place in the series of events that shortly preceded that catastrophe of ruin to Judaism and to its great city and nation.

2. As already said, the one cluster of events to which these four seals point and which they symbolize I find in the period immediately preceding the fall of Jerusalem (A. D. 70). To sustain this view I adduce the limitations of time just referred to in the opening of the book and elsewhere; in the scenes of the fifth seal; and in the landmarks which appear in chap. 11. I have also two other considerations of much force, viz.: (1.) The analogous and indeed strikingly similar prophecies of Christ himself as given in Mat. 24; Mark 13; and Luke 21. In Mat. 24: 6-9 we have these words: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in diverse places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." As given by Luke with at least equal strength, we have (21: 9-11): "Ye shall hear of wars and commotions; nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and great earthquakes shall be in diverse places and famines and pestilences, and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven."—That all these predicted events come in before the fall of Jerusalem is proved by the fact that they precede the predicted "encompassing" of that city "with armies" (Luke 21: 20, 21), which was to be their signal for flight to the mountains.—If any reader should feel the need of more proof, he can find it in the precise limitations of time within which Jesus locates those predicted events: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled" (Luke 21: 32,

and Mat. 24: 31). Thus the predictions of Jesus himself as **given** in the first three gospels and these predictions unfolded before John in the first four seals and indeed in the sixth and seventh also as we shall see, are entirely at one—harmonious and coincident. They predict the same calamities; to occur at the same time; among the same people; upon the same great city.—(2.) The other fact, which naturally closes my argument, is the *precise fulfillment in the history of that period*, say during the five years (A. D. 65–70) immediately preceding the final fall of Jerusalem. Josephus has written out this history very minutely, and has shown that this prophecy has its perfect counterpart in the events of that precise period. Yet Josephus probably knew nothing about these predictions, either as recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, or as shown to John in these symbols. No suspicion of a purpose to make out a fulfillment of prophecy can possibly attach to him or to his history.—Drawing mainly from the work of Josephus, yet in part from Roman sources, Jahn in his “History of the Hebrew Commonwealth” has given a more succinct account of these scenes of sedition, civil war, and consequent treachery, corruption, war and carnage. Thus—“When Festus became procurator of Judea [A. D. 60] he found it full of robbers who devastated the country with fire and sword.” [Jahn, page 447.] From this time until the breaking out of the Jewish war in A. D. 66, civil commotions were constantly occurring; scenes of blood filled the whole country with alarm. In Syria and in Galilee—points sufficiently remote from Jerusalem to account for the precise fact—“ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars,” these conflicts of armies were fearful. On one day “almost all the Jews of Cesarea were murdered: their countrymen were highly exasperated; they collected in great numbers, plundered and devastated the villages and cities of the Syrians. Philadelphia, Sebonitis, Gerasa, Pella, and Scythopolis suffered the most severely; Gadara, Hippo, Gaulanitis, Kedosa of the Tyrians, Ptolemais, Gaza, and Cesarea were attacked; Sebaste, Askelon, Anthedon, and Gaza were burnt.” “On this account the Syrians fell upon the Jews who dwelt in their cities; and the whole country presented a scene of confusion and blood. *In every city there were hostile armies*, and there was no safety for any one but in the strength of the party to which he belonged. At Askelon, Ptolemais, Tyre, Hippo and Gadara, the Jews were involved in one general massacre,” etc. [Jahn 457, and Josephus’ Jewish Wars, Book II, chap. 19.] And when in A. D. 67, Vespasian swept through Galilee and Samaria, and city after city fell before him, “the scenes of horror and carnage were fearful; the merciless sword spared neither age nor sex; cities were left without inhabitant.” These scenes correspond with but too sad precision to the prophetic portraying which we have in these symbols.—I must not pass from these symbols without adverting again to the scenes at the opening of the first seal—the white horse and the

crowned rider, going forth conquering and to conquer. I suggest that this group of symbols fitly holds the first place in the foreground, comprehensively forshadowing the grand result of all these judgments and plagues upon the wicked to be *victory and glory to the Great Conqueror*. This book of prophecy opens as it closes, this first seal being significantly correlated to the last prophetic scene before the binding of Satan. "I saw heaven opened (19: 11-16), and behold a *white horse*, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire and on his head *were many crowns*." "The armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." This scene is the grand, triumphal procession: the first (Rev. 6: 2) is the foreshadowing pledge of this final result.

9. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11. And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

Before the revealing Spirit advances further in these descriptive symbols of judgment and terrible retribution, it is vital to his moral purpose to show the prophet and his readers somewhat more definitely *on whom* they are to fall and *why*. They needed to know this for their own consolation and for the confirming of their souls in Christian courage and fortitude to endure the fiery persecutions then before them. Hence the scenes revealed in this fifth section.—Here are seen *under the altar*, *i. e.*, at the foot of it, in imploring attitude, the souls of men already slain for their fidelity to Christ and his gospel. John hears their cry—"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" It seemed to them (why should it not?) that truth was suffering, that Christ's kingdom was going down, that justice was outraged by the longer permission of such horrible persecutions, and even by the delay of righteous retribution upon their murderers. God heard their cry and answered. First, white robes are given to each one of them, signifying that personally they are conquerors and shall have their reward—that prospectively their cause is certain to conquer, and their Great King to come forth victorious and triumphant.—They are also told that there must be yet a short delay of final

judgment on their persecutors—a few more of their fellow-servants and brethren having yet a martyr's death to suffer and a martyr's crown to win.—This revelation, made in the opening of the fifth seal, had an obvious and admirable moral purpose. It not only made the previous seals intelligible and the subsequent seals (the sixth and the seventh) as well, showing that they predict God's retributions upon the persecutors of his people; but it revealed an open heaven and a blessed reward for the martyred dead, and gave them assurance of final victory to the cause for which they suffered. These were much needed consolations and they were inexpressibly rich.—I have more than once referred to this fifth seal in its bearings upon the *time* of these predicted events. There being good grounds for assuming that these souls seen under the altar were when John saw this vision but recently slain—that they were the martyred Christians of that very age and perhaps of those very churches (Antipas being a sample, 2: 13), I infer that John and his first readers would feel the full force of such a scene and would find in it, first indeed the fact that they had more persecution yet to suffer; but secondly, that it would be only for a little season, and that reward and triumph were sure to follow.—The grounds for assuming that these martyrs and their persecutors were men of that age are in brief—that this is the obvious construction of the words, "on them that dwell [now] on the earth;" that these scenes must certainly be construed in the light of the limitations of time which open and which close the book, and which appear in chap. 11 and elsewhere; that therefore it is simply certain that John and his first readers must have understood the revelations of the fifth seal as applying to their own already martyred brethren, and that therefore this construction must be the true one.—To suppose that these were the souls of martyrs, not already slain but *to be slain* one thousand years thereafter, in the days of the Waldenses and Albigenses, is simply to wrest the words from their obvious sense and application, and force upon them a meaning which could never have entered the mind of John or of those whom he addressed. Such methods of interpretation can not be too severely censured. They practically destroy all confidence in prophecy by ignoring the legitimate principles and laws of prophetic interpretation. Good men, most excellent men, have made this mistake let no word of mine impeach their goodness or their worthiness of aim; but for truth's sake and to preserve prophecy from abuse, I must protest against such interpretation.

12. And I beheld 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 become as blood;

13. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

Here are premonitory indications of coming judgments. All nature is thrilled with terror and awe, and gives tokens of her agony. The heavens above and the earth beneath seem to forecast the fearful doom of guilty man and the awful coming of his righteous Judge for terrible retribution. Every symbol significant of terror, wrath, plague, is tasked to its utmost capacity to set forth the consummation of judgment and fiery indignation upon the guilty.—“There was a great earthquake.” As recorded by Matthew (24: 7) Jesus had said of this very period: “There shall be earthquakes in diverse places.” Palestine was somewhat subject to earthquakes. It would be easy to verify this prediction in a literal sense. Yet the genius of prophetic vision by no means requires us to find a precisely literal fulfillment of any one of these descriptive points. John states what he *saw* when the sixth seal was broken—things which had significance indeed, but which did not mean that precisely these things, literally, should occur. A great earthquake was a pertinent symbol of social and political convulsions—the ruin of cities; the fall of kingdoms; the wreck of society.—The Old Testament prophets had said, “The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood” (Joel 2: 31 and Isa. 13: 10); “the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light” (Isa. 13: 10); “all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine and as a falling fig from the fig-tree” (Isa. 34: 4); “that the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll” (Isa. 34: 4). As to the removing of mountains and islands, Jeremiah had said (4: 24), “I beheld the mountains and lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly;” and Ezekiel (26: 18), “Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall.” As recorded by Matthew (24: 29) Jesus had used the same symbols: “The sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” These symbols therefore were not new to prophecy; they might have been familiar to John through the reading of the Old Testament prophets. Their sense here is essentially the same as there.

15. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

16. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

The moral force of this prophecy is signally heightened by showing not only how the material universe quailed and trembled, but how the hearts of the mightiest of men quailed also, and how they fled for shelter to the rocks and to the mountains, but too glad if they might be buried beneath their fall rather than meet the face and the frown of Him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb in the great day of his wrath!—The Greek has the comprehensive expression—“hid themselves *into* the dens and rocks of the mountain,” meaning that they fled *into* them for a hiding-place.—There was a suggested sense of retribution in this which both the persecuted and their persecutors must feel—that whereas the hunted Christians had often and for a long time been compelled to flee to caverns and rocks in the wild mountains, in some periods to the catacombs of the dead for refuge, now this prophecy reverses the two parties: those who had hunted them down to shed their blood are now the fleeing ones, to hide in the same caverns and fastnesses whither they had driven defenseless Christians and where they had perhaps sought and found their victims. Isa. 14: 2, treating of Jews and Chaldeans, predicts the same reversal of their respective destiny.—Note also the terrible significance and power of those ideas—“hide us from the *face* of Him that sitteth on the throne”—for who can bear to meet his *dreadful eye*! Who can endure that look of blended dignity and love and yet of justice and righteousness before which no sinner can stand? And who shall measure the force of that marvelous combination of ideas—“the wrath of the Lamb!” It is He of Calvary, the Lamb slain there, but here thought of as having been maliciously *murdered*, yet now meeting his murderers face to face in fiery retribution! They had wildly cried, “His blood be on us and on our children”—and *now it comes!*

Recurring again to the application of this seal to the events shortly preceding the fall of Jerusalem, I am well aware that some of my readers will have the feeling that the prophecy outmeasures the event—is too grand, too vast, too terrible to have had even a primary reference to those events of history.—To such I reply (1.) That history has one way of putting its facts: poetic and symbolic prophecy, another. History might tell us that fifteen strong cities of Galilee were carried by storm and the masses of men, women and children butchered; that about three millions of Jews, convened for their great annual passover, were crowded within the walls of Jerusalem when the Roman legions invested the city and shut them in: and that when the city fell, scarcely so many thousands escaped—famine, pestilence, conflagration, their own sword and the Roman sword, had combined their powers of torture and death to make this scene a climax of horrors! Somewhat of this sort would be the manner of History in her record of such a scene. But Poetry in prophecy might give you a bird's-eye-view of the convulsions and agonies of the heavens above and the earth beneath, and might paint a picture of terror and dread

where you would see kings and princes, chieftains and warriors, in fearful consternation, rushing to the mountains and imploring rocks and hills to fall upon them and hide them from the awful face of God!—Now it may not be an easy thing for us to place the two descriptions side by side and say which means the most—which outmeasures the other. Men would probably come to different conclusions upon such a question, governed very much by the susceptibility of their minds to the poetic figures.—But passing this, I remark (2.) That the most rational way of testing our main question—whether this prophecy of the sixth seal can be legitimately applied in its primary sense to the fall of Jerusalem, is, to see what is said in other prophecies of the same event. I refer the reader therefore to the words of Moses (Lev. 26: 14-39, and Deut. 28: 15-68)—prophecies, it is generally conceded, equally applicable to the fall of Jerusalem before the Romans and to its fall before the Chaldeans. Here we read—“The Lord will make thy plagues *wonderful*,” etc.: “He will bring upon thee all the plagues of Egypt which thou wast afraid of, and they shall cleave to thee; and every sickness and every plague which *is not written* in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee until thou be destroyed.”—Moreover, Jesus himself said (Mat. 24: 21), “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”—How can any symbols of prophecy be thought to outmeasure this?



CHAPTER VII.

This entire chapter is interposed between the sixth seal and the seventh, interrupting for the time the regular succession of the scenes disclosed by the opening of the seals. We may call this as many have done, an “episode;” but the name is of small account. The simple fact is that the successive seals disclose in order the judgments to be sent by God on some great persecuting power. This is their theme and this only. But here is a revelation, not of judgments on the guilty but of blessings, first upon those Jewish converts who having accepted Christ by faith are marked for exemption from the judgments coming on their land; and next upon Gentile converts considered as “coming out of great tribulation.” They have their sublimely glorious reward around the throne of God and the Lamb.—More than one high moral purpose was to be answered by the revelations of this chapter. (1.) It lifted a great burden of solicitude from hearts trembling for the ark of God lest the almost omnipresent influence of persecution and the almost resistless power lodged in persecuting hands should

quench the gospel's light and prevent the conversion of men to Christ. To Christians, suffering and terror-stricken, nothing would be more natural than this feeling of discouragement under which Satan might tempt them to despair of their cause. To all such, this revelation would be at once timely and precious.—(2.) This chapter purposely brings out near its close the ineffable blessedness of those who have "gone before" through fire and flame to a martyr's death and a martyr's reward. We can be at no loss as to the moral purpose of these special revelations of the bliss of heaven which we find interposed repeatedly in this book amid the predictions of judgment on persecutors. They bring down the grand motive power of the heavenly rest to brace the tried and tempted souls of the persecuted to Christian heroism and patient endurance, sinking the agony and terror of a martyr's death out of sight under the glories of that other world so near.

1. And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

"After these things" [*meta tauta*], here as always in the sense, *very soon*, or perhaps *immediately* after.—The scene would impress the beholder with a sense of God's supreme control over all the harmful as well as the wholesome agencies of the material world, suggesting also his use of angelic power to any extent at his own wise discretion whenever he might have occasion to deviate little or much from his own established laws of nature. This is no doubt a great fact in the providential government of God over the universe of matter and to some extent of mind also, and is pertinently brought out in the disclosures of this book for its bearings upon the resources of God for the protection of his friends and for the destruction of his enemies.

2. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and sea,

3. Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

Another angel now appears, having the great seal of God to place upon his redeemed ones to mark them for protection against the destructive agencies soon to be let loose upon the land. He commands the angels of the four winds to delay their work of devastation till his work among God's people is done.—Why this angel is seen coming from the east is not said, and is therefore a question of pure speculation. We let such things pass.

4. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*

5. Of the tribe of Juda *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Reuben *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Gad *were sealed twelve thousand.*

6. Of the tribe of Aser *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Nephthalim *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Manasses *were sealed twelve thousand.*

7. Of the tribe of Simeon *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Levi *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Issachar *were sealed twelve thousand.*

8. Of the tribe of Zabulon *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Joseph *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Benjamin *were sealed twelve thousand.*

It will be seen that these sealed ones are *Jews*. It is due to the order and method of these visions that the number from each tribe is the same. There is no occasion to press this to a literal precision.—In the names of the tribes it is not strange that Judah stands first, nor that idolatrous Dan is omitted, and Manasseh included along with Joseph to make up the number twelve. The sins of Ephraim during the age of the revolt may have ruled his name out of the list.—As to the historic fact here predicted, there can be no rational doubt that these are the fruits of the gospel among the Jews prior to the fall of their city and the desolation of their land. We readily recall the abundant proofs of God's purpose to give his own covenant people the offers of gospel salvation through their own Messiah, and to press them to accept, long, patiently, earnestly, before he should cut short their day of salvation and bring on their night of doom. We remember how John, the precursor, lifted his voice throughout all the thousands of Judah, preaching repentance, preparing the way of the Lord; enjoining the people to believe on the greater One to come after him. We remember how Jesus preached in all the cities of Galilee, Samaria, and last of all in Judah and Jerusalem; how he sent forth his chosen twelve to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" how, on the eve of his ascension, he enjoined them to commence their world-wide gospel mission by "*beginning at Jerusalem*;" and how the apostles exhorted their Jewish hearers to repent and save themselves from that untoward generation and its near impending doom. The comfort of our passage lies in the assurance it gives that many were thus sealed unto salvation. (See also Acts 21: 20.) Like the households of Israel marked with the blood of sprinkling on the night of the first passover in Egypt, so these thousands of Israel are marked for the passing over of the fearful plagues of the Almighty when his angels of desolation should let up their restraining hand, and give free range to every agency of

storm, tempest, lightning, hail and rain upon that guilty and doomed people.—It might be suggested also that this sealing [marking] in their foreheads has also in view the scene in Ezek. 9, where the man clothed in linen [white] sets a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for the abominations of Jerusalem.

9. After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

10. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

“After this”—*i. e.*, as usual, *immediately* after.—Plainly this multitude are not Israelites, for they are of all nations, kindreds, etc. Comprehensively they are Gentiles, and of course are converts to Christ—saved Gentiles, corresponding to the saved Jews already shown in this vision. There was no occasion to represent them as sealed in their foreheads, to be spared when the destroying angels should go forth, for, as here thought of, these angels are destined against the land of Israel only. Hence the things to be shown as to them were their equal participation in the purity and the blissful rewards of heaven, their equally full and joyous ascription of their salvation to the same God on the great central throne and to the Lamb. Precisely this we have here.—The moral purposes of this scene seem to be the joy to Christian hearts that this class of the saved are a countless multitude, and that they are made welcome to the full blessedness of the heavenly world.—It scarcely need be said that the import of their song, “Salvation to our God,” etc., is not that God is saved, but that he saves lost men—is not that salvation goes to him, but that it comes from him. The *glory* of our salvation be unto God and to the Lamb for evermore!

11. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God,

12. Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, *be* unto our God forever and ever. Amen.

All the angels, forming the outer circle and inclosing the great throne, the four living ones and the twenty-four elders, now manifest their perfect sympathy and their profound interest. The seven-fold ascription, the staple of their song, corresponds remarkably with the similar seven-fold ascription from the same angelic host as it appears in 5: 12, yet differing in the order of arrangement and in the substitution of “thanksgiving” here for “riches” there.—What a song! No wonder Peter should say (1 Eps. 4:

12) of the magnificent themes of gospel salvation—"which things the angels desire [bend over from the battlements of the heavenly city] to look into." And now when these matters are unfolded in the prophetic visions shown in heaven itself, and illustrated by the arrival there of saved myriads, both Jew and Gentile, why should not their heart's love and adoration be poured forth in glorious song?

13. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

14. And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

This question by one of the elders was intended to fix the prophet's attention, and thus make a deeper moral impression. He would prepare the prophet's mind for his own answer. They "came out of great tribulation;" they have seen sorrow, trial, torture and blood unto death: but those white robes are not precisely the crown of their martyrdom; *that whiteness is due to the blood of the Lamb!*—Here we must pause to think of the striking combination of elements in this figure—washing to a snowy whiteness *in blood*. Was not blood, simple blood, in that age as in this, *red*, and not white? defiling, and not cleansing? Yet there is both fitness and force in this marvelous figure, and both inspired men on earth and their representatives in heaven recognize it promptly. The cleansing is moral, not physical; and in the blood of the Lamb there is untold, not to say infinite, moral power for the cleansing of souls from sin. Only by that blood comes pardon for the guilty; only through the fact and the sense of pardon comes that wondrous moral transformation by which trust, gratitude and love take the place in depraved souls of distrust, fear and rebellion.

15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Such are the heavenly joys of the saved, especially of the holy martyred dead. "Serving him day and night in his temple" is imagery of Jewish east, the favored and honored men under the

Mosaic economy being those whose service lay nearest the holy of holies, evermore around the Shechinah, his manifested presence. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!"—"Shall dwell among them" still has the ancient earthly system for its figurative ground-work—the verb "dwell" meaning precisely, *shall spread his tent or tabernacle* over them. It is implied that he too abides in the same tent with them. How blissful!—Comprehensively there can be but two main sources of illustration here in our earthly prison life for setting before us the blessedness of the heavenly state. Both are drawn upon largely in this passage: (1.) Negatively; the denial to it of all the forms of suffering so well known on earth: (2.) Positively; the manifested presence, sympathy and love of the Infinite Father, of the Son, and of all the holy in that world of love.—The negations appear in vs. 16, 17: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." No torrid heats shall light on them; no tears shall ever dim their eyes again!—Of course this list of negations does not attempt to name all the ills of life; these are specimen cases to cover all.—It should be noted that this method of teaching us heaven comes down to our easy and perfect comprehension. It lies quite within the field of our positive knowledge. Some of us have felt the pains of human frailty; we have also seen the sad indications of pain in the dear ones we love. But there shall be no more of it *there!*—Nor let us fail to note how exquisitely tender are the last words of this wonderful passage—"God shall wipe away all tears" [Greek, "every tear"] "from their eyes." Observe it is not precisely that all tears shall be wiped away; is not that they shall wipe away their own tears; is not that they shall wipe away each other's tears; is not that the angels shall wipe away the tears of weeping saints as of their younger brethren; it is not even that Jesus shall wipe away their tears (though this might doubtless have been said); but it is that the Great Father puts down his own tender hand and wipes every tear away! After this, what could be said more!—But we will not disparage the other points so tenderly put in this matchless passage. The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne, appearing still as the Lamb of Calvary—for the scenes of that great sacrifice have left their enduring impression on all the life and joy of heaven—Jesus, their once crucified Redeemer, is still as ever their *Shepherd*, and shall feed them, and he shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. Food for their mental and moral nature—thought, knowledge, truth, such revelations of God and of God's works as will minister to the endless growth of sinless minds around the throne of God shall be supplied to them by their well-known Shepherd. Does he not know every want of their being? Has he not constituted that being, social, intellectual and moral, and has he not nurtured each and all of its growing powers on such scale as the scenes of earth admit, so that with infinite facility he can resume their education and carry it on from one stage of progress to another, all

along the march of heaven's eternal ages? Well, all this and more may be included and implied in the simple words—"The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall *feed* them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters."



CHAPTER VIII.

Unlike either of the first six seals this seventh when opened discloses not one particular symbol, indicating a single event (or some special phase of an historic period) to be sketched in few words; but it discloses an entire sevenfold set of new symbols; in other words, the seventh seal is itself expanded into the seven trumpets, and each of these trumpets becomes a distinct symbol. The object is manifestly to *spread out* the symbols of judgment and woe, and make them more impressive by a fuller detail—a more minute and extended description.—According to Mosaic law (Num. 10: 9) and Hebrew usage (2 Chron. 13: 12) the great trumpet was blown as the signal of war, and hence became a natural symbol of calamity, judgment.

In this chapter we have with the opening of the seventh seal, the solemn silence (v. 1); the seven angels receiving each his trumpet (v. 2); the symbol of incense accompanying and representing the prayers of saints (vs. 3, 4); the casting of fire from the altar down to the earth and the results (v. 5); and then the scenes which successively followed the sounding of the first four of these trumpets (vs. 6-13).

1. And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

This is the silence of solemn, portentous expectation! Momentous results are foretold: there is a sense as of something grand, appalling, sublime, yet fearful, about to happen. All heaven is still as if holding breath with strained eye to see what is coming. Yet this waiting period is very short, for judgments hasten to fulfill their mission.

2. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

It is noticeable that the original Greek like our English version has it, not merely seven angels, but "*the* seven angels," as if they were made definite by previous mention or by some other circumstances of their case. Hence those who take the "seven spirits before the throne" (1: 4) to be the seven archangels explain the

article here as referring to that previous mention. Others suppose them to be simply the seven pre-eminent or *arch-angels*, assumed to be somewhat well known as usually or normally "standing before God." This seems to meet best all the conditions of this case: the seven who customarily stand nearest before God and of highest rank.—It is more to our purpose to note that this is the trump of doom; that these angels have the ministry of sounding forth each his message of fearful forewarning.

3. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4. And the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

It results from the prescribed arrangements for Jewish temple worship that prayer is associated with incense. The odors exhaled from burning incense ascended before God in the hour of public prayer, indicating that prayer comes up before God with a pleasing and acceptable fragrance. See Luke 1: 10, and Lev. 16: 12, 13.—The angels seem here to perform the functions before the altar in heaven which the High Priest performed before the altar on earth. Whether this scene indicates that the angels offered their prayers along with the prayers of saints on earth, it may not be possible for us to determine with certainty. It is however sufficiently clear that the prayers of saints on earth have an important connection with God's sending forth judgments upon the great persecutors of his Zion, even as was shown on the opening of the fifth seal (6: 9-11). The moral purpose of this exhibition we may assume was to assure those suffering Christians that God did certainly hear their prayer for the triumph of his cause and the deliverance of his people, and for the destruction of opposing powers, in so far as this result was demanded by the ends of justice and victory.

5. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast *it* into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

This scene evinces the close connection between the prayers that go up from the stricken souls of persecuted saints, and the judgments that come down from the Hearer of prayer upon their persecutors.

6. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

The prolonged preparation—the careful, almost slow development of the preliminary steps, foretold the magnitude and solemnity of the impending scene.

7. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was 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 sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;

9. And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

10. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

11. And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

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; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

Remarkably these first four trumpets have several of their most prominent points in common, being alike in all; *e. g.*, (1.) That the plague denoted by each has its own special sphere, the first falling upon the land; the second upon the sea; the third upon rivers and fountains; the fourth upon the heavenly bodies as sources of light: and (2.) That each plague limits its destructive agency to one third part:—one third part of the trees of the earth were burnt up; one third part of the sea became blood; one third part of the living creatures in the sea died; one third part of the ships on the great waters were destroyed; the great star from heaven fell on the third part of the rivers and fountains; one third part of the waters became wormwood; one third part of the sun, moon and stars was smitten, and one third of the light of day and night also was cut off. Now it seems obvious that this definite regularity is due to the influence of the idea of *order* over these symbols, and must not be supposed to measure with just this precision the extent of these several plagues. Nor indeed need we expect to locate these judgments in actual history, the first installment upon the earth; the second upon the sea; the third upon rivers and fountains; and the fourth upon the great

lights of heaven. To assume and expect this would be to misconceive the true purpose of such symbolic representations. Much less as it seems to me are we authorized to map out these successive trumpets on the grand chart of human history, giving to the first a section of from two to five hundred years, more or less; to the second another successive section of either fixed or variable length, applying every point of these symbols to some supposed analogous event, etc. Some have done this, with immense labor, but with ever varying results. It is simply impossible that such speculations in searching out some analogies between these symbols and the history of the long ages since the Christian era, can ever be harmonious, or very satisfactory to any but those who have made them. The fatal vice in them all is that their very construction of these symbols makes them a labyrinth of mysteries. Then, having made them such, they try to find a path through and out, with absolutely no thread to guide them. They begin the study of the whole book by ignoring or ruling out the landmarks, or to retain the figure, the guiding thread which marks the pathway through.

But let us return to the symbols of our passage. To some extent they seem to imitate the plagues on Egypt; especially the first, the plague of hail; the second, the waters turned to blood; the third is analogous; the fourth bears a resemblance to the plague of darkness, or rather it follows the general law of poetic imagery by which darkness represents calamity.—The “great mountain burning with fire, cast into the sea,” suggests volcanic eruptions as its source; the great star burning as a lamp falling from heaven has its prototype at long intervals in those startling manifestations in the heavens which have the appearance of being great world-conflagrations, burning for months with surprising brilliancy, and then becoming extinct forever!—In verse 11 the waters that became wormwood were not only bitter but poisonous.—In verse 12 it becomes a question, in reference to the day and the night, whether the language means that one-third of the usual period of each was made absolutely dark; or that one-third of their ordinary light was withdrawn, leaving but two-thirds of the average amount shining. The latter seems most probable, this being the natural result of obscuring one-third part of those luminous bodies from which day and night obtain their light.—As has been said, all these symbols indicate calamity, judgment. I can not regard it as demanded of the interpreter that he make up a series of historic facts which shall precisely match these symbols one by one and measure accurately to each its amount of woe, as inflicted on each city, or each generation, or in each year. Suffice it that Jesus himself in his predictions of the fall of Jerusalem and its premonitory indications (Mat. 24, and its parallel passages) has drawn a picture strikingly similar to this. Let it also suffice that history fills the interval of some ten years, more or less, before the final fall of the city, with scenes of alarm, ter-

ror, outrage, calamity, carnage, crime, and woe, to which these symbols correspond with a precision that seems to me to leave nothing more to be desired.

13. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, 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!

The best authorities read the text *eagle* instead of "angel"—the sense being no doubt an angel flying eagle-like through mid-heaven. His mission was to pre-intimate yet more fearful woes upon the sounding of the last three trumpets. Hence these last three are frequently designated "woe-trumpets."



CHAPTER IX.

This chapter gives us the fifth and sixth trumpets, spoken of sometimes as the first and second of the woe-trumpets.

1. And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

2. 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 the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

This "star" represented a conscious intelligent agent, for he receives the key of the pit of the abyss and proceeds to open it. He is one of God's angels, brilliant and distinguished like a star. For the figure we may compare Num. 24: 17: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel and shall smite the corners of Moab," etc.

3. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

4. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

This may not mean that the smoke generated the locusts, nor that the locusts, coming up in a dense cloud, were at first mistaken for smoke, but were ultimately seen to be only locusts; but rather that the issuing smoke was the natural product of a burning pit and that the locusts came up *with* the smoke and so emerged from it.—Their power was like that of scorpions—to torment rather than to kill. That is, while they were nearly locusts in form and general appearance, they were essentially scorpions in their power and functions. This special feature is brought out yet more definitely by explicit statement (vs. 4 and 5).—Naturally locusts are destructive to grass, green things and trees, subsisting on such food; but these are commissioned to hurt only men, and of men, only those who had not the seal of God in their foreheads—a circumstance which closely connects this seal and its events with the scenes of chap. 7. The sealing there was preparatory to the exemption from the plagues revealed here. This fact forbids us to divorce that marking of good men which lies between the sixth seal and the seventh from this symbol of torment which belongs to the fifth trumpet. It would be a reckless severing of this intimate connection to interpret the four intervening trumpets (chap. 8) as sweeping us on over whole centuries of the history of our world, to find the scenes of the fifth trumpet afar down ages beyond the marking of good men for exemption from its plagues as given in chapter 7.

5. And to them it was given 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 striketh a man.

6. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

Here the significance of the symbol is brought out yet more fully. They are not to kill but to hurt—not to take life but to take from it all its joys and leave men longing for a death that will not come to their relief!—We can not be far from the truth when we apply this fearful symbol of woe to those demoniac passions that burned in human hearts and fired them to madness and agony in the early months of that awful siege of the city of Jerusalem. It was hell uncapped and its ministries of torment sent up in clouds to smite their maddening stings into the guilty souls of men. Whoever will read the account of those conflicts and feuds, or rather, of that infuriate madness which set brother against brother, father against son, and son against father, and turned the myriad swords and daggers of her warriors one against another, making the salvation of the city impossible, and its unutterable ruin inevitable; and then will consider for a moment how this must have stricken down all hope in every Jewish bosom,

and palsied every arm, and made life intolerable, will see a striking harmony between the prophetic portraying and the historic facts.—Other prophecy had touched these prominent features of this awful scene. Moses had written (Deut. 28: 66, 67): “And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night and shalt have none assurance of thy life: in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were evening! And at evening, Would God it were morning!”—Jesus also, as recorded by Luke (21: 23-26): “There shall be great distress upon the land and wrath upon the people: upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”

7. And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men.

8. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions.

9. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

10. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails; and their power *was* to hurt men five months.

These descriptive features combine to make up a most appalling picture.—Five months was the normal life-period of the locust. This limit of time is therefore probably due to this fact, rather than to the precise duration of the historic events to which the symbol looks. Some critics stretch this period of five months to one hundred and fifty years, on the baseless assumption that a day in prophecy is a year in history and in fact. Such theorists are respectfully requested to study Dissertation I, at the close of this volume.

11. And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath *his* name Apollyon.

12. One woe is past; *and*, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

These ministers of torment, coming up from the great pit of the abyss, are marshaled and led on by a king whose name signifies *The Destroyer*. This entire symbol of the fifth trumpet, and more particularly this one feature of it—their king Apollyon—seem to show that God employs the spirits of darkness as his ministers of vengeance and judgment upon the incorrigibly guilty in this world even—perhaps as foreshadowing their similar service of torturing

the wicked in the great prison-house of woe in the world to come. Let no one think of the devil as too good to torment his victims—too good to lead on the agents and ministers of torture to madden and desolate human souls, either in earth or hell, in this world or the next!

13. And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

14. Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

The sixth trumpet corresponds closely in general significance with the fifth, differing chiefly in the respect of a manifest advance; for while that was only torture, this is actual death.—That this voice comes from the golden altar indicates again how close the connection is between the prayers of saints suffering under persecution and these judgments of God upon their persecutors. Compare 6: 9-11, and 8: 3-6.—That the four angels of destruction are loosed from the great river Euphrates is obviously an historical allusion, either to Nebuchadnezzar or to Cyrus, and most naturally to the former, since God raised him up as his servant to scourge his ancient people in that age of their deep and desperate apostasy. The analogies between that age and this were in many points most obvious: hence the pertinence of this symbol which brings up God's agents of desolation from the same quarter. The Roman arms were only a second edition of the fierce and terrible Chaldeans, sent of God to scourge a like guilty and hopeless apostasy from the God of their fathers.

15. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

16. And the number of the army of the horsemen *were* two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

The time is limited, the period short; so were the scenes of the siege and fall of Jerusalem. The symbols thus far seem to contemplate only its earlier stages, not its final catastrophe.—The numbers of horsemen are astonishingly great—so great that no human eye could estimate them; but the prophet says that he heard the number stated. We are left to imagine how thrilling this scene must have been.

17. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses *were* as the

heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

18. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

19. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails *were* like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

It is remarkable that although the number of this army of cavalry is so enormous, yet little is apparently made of the martial force of the riders—the horsemen; none of their features being given save their breastplates; while the description of the horses is very minute, and their destructive force is terrible. These circumstances may be in part ascribed to the fact that the Jews never had cavalry of their own for war, but had some bitter and well-remembered experience of the terror of this arm of military strength. Hence such a representation as this would be fearfully impressive.—In the fulfilling history, the shock of the Roman arms was terrible. It brought down upon the Jewish state and society a power which they could by no means resist.

20. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

21. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

The men not killed by these plagues refused to repent. With one heart they persisted to the last in their rebellion against God and in their mad infatuation. Hence there could be no reversal of their doom, nor any long suspension in this series of desolating plagues.—The description of their sins names the worship of devils and of senseless idols, because, of all sins known to the Hebrew prophets, these had been most abominable and offensive to God. It can not be certainly inferred that the crimes of the Jews which filled their cup of national guilt to its brim in the age here referred to were precisely of this form. The terms of the description are historic in their origin, taking their shape from the ancient prophets. Their actual sins indicated a strength of moral hardihood in rebellion against God, a depth of depravity, a desperation in their stand against Jesus of Nazareth, altogether surpassing the worst idolatries of the old prophetic ages. The fact that under the most fearful scourging they would not repent, sufficed to seal their doom; and now its consummation hastens on apace.

CHAPTER X.

This short chapter, unsurpassed in the magnificence of its scenes, is remarkable for its introduction of new imagery. The old symbolism which in its general outline has been constantly before us through chapters 5-9 is now, not perhaps entirely dropped, but greatly modified by the appearance of new elements. Consequently we have new questions of interpretation to grapple with.—But let it be suggested that in so far as these questions pertain rather to the drapery of the vision than to its contents and subject-matter, their importance is only secondary, and is not vital. Yet it must be a matter of some interest to look into these questions of drapery and symbol.—Thus we have here the questions: (1.) *Who* is this mighty angel? the Son of God himself, or some archangel? (2.) *What* is this little book? what are its contents? what its relations to the first book (chap. 5), and what (if any) to the second part of this book of Revelation (chaps. 12-19)? (3.) What was said by “the seven thunders?” and if their sayings are not to be even conjectured, why did they speak at all, and why is any thing said of their speaking? (4.) What is meant by the twofold result of eating this book, the sweetness and the bitterness?—To these questions we will give some attention in their place.

More vitally important than any mere question of costume is the fact that this chapter comes in here to apprise us that the grand catastrophe is near—that the long delayed and final blow is about to fall. The blast of the seventh trumpet, closing out the contents of the seventh seal, will cut short and complete the fearful work of retribution on the first grand enemy of Christianity. The event is of such importance as to justify these solemn premonitions by means of this new and magnificent imagery.—Hence in this chapter we have a mighty angel coming down from heaven, and his appearance (v. 1); his little book and his attitude (v. 2); the speaking of the seven thunders which was not to be recorded (vs. 3, 4); the solemn oath of this mighty angel and its import (vs. 5-7); the taking and eating of the book and its effect (vs. 8-10); with an intimation to the prophet of his further work (v. 11).

1. And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow *was* upon his head, and his face *was* as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

The reader will notice that the standpoint of the seer is somewhat changed. From chapter 4 onward, his point of view is mainly in heaven, save that his sweep sometimes seems to embrace earth as well; but here he sees an “angel *come down from heaven*”—*i. e.*, to the earth upon which the seer is supposed to stand.—One “mighty angel” has been seen before (5: 2) where

our English version has "strong," but the Greek has the same word as here.—"The rainbow," it should be read, perhaps in the sense, *the* rainbow par excellence, in its highest splendor and glory. "His face as the sun" corresponds to the description of "the Son of man" (1: 16), and not essentially unlike are his feet; here, "as pillars of fire;" there, "like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace."—Was this "other mighty angel" truly the Son of man, or some lofty archangel? I incline strongly to the former opinion, induced by the majesty of his appearance, by the close analogy between this description and that given of Jesus Christ in 1: 13-16; by the fact that Jesus appropriately has the custody of the book of destiny; as in 5: 7, and 6: 1, etc., so here also; and further, that when Jesus becomes a messenger, bringing down the book of destiny from heaven to earth, he may very fitly be termed an *angel*. This corresponds with Old Testament usage. (See Ex. 23: 20-23, and elsewhere.)

2. And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and *his left foot* on the earth,

Questions of secondary interest cluster about this "little book," claiming only a brief attention. Of these the main one is—*What were its contents?* Did it comprise the second great division of this book of Revelation, *i. e.*, chaps. 12-19? Or was it only a codicil or supplement to the first book with its seven seals, or possibly, what remained of that first book itself, but brought forward prominently here only to reveal the great fact of this chapter—the immediate approach of the grand catastrophe—the fact of *no more delay*, but the terrible execution of the long impending vengeance?—I am drawn to the latter view by the following considerations: (1.) No "book" of destiny appears in the imagery throughout chaps. 12-19. (2.) If this "little book" comprised those chapters, it would not be *little* relatively to the first, but *great*. (3.) This book appears at first as "*open*," indicating that its contents are fairly out; not shut up; a circumstance appropriate if its contents were the things brought out in this chapter, but inappropriate if they were the events of chaps. 12-18. (4.) It will seem incongruous and unaccountable that a little book, pregnant with the prophecies of Rome (chaps. 12-18), should be brought to view here, on the very eve of the great catastrophe of Judaism, where we naturally look for concentration of thought upon this near impending and most appalling event. This latter consideration has chief influence on my mind to restrain me from finding Rome in this "little book."

The point made above (No. 3) somewhat favors the opinion that this book is essentially the same as the first, now appearing small because the greater part of its contents have been disposed of. It is significantly said to be "*open*," or rather as the participle strictly means *opened*, laid open—all its seven seals broken, and

all its contents now disclosed. It is no longer a book sealed with seven seals but a book with all its seals broken. It is in the same hand as when seen before in heaven. He brings it down now for the special purpose of making the solemn proclamation by the sacred oath that the time of vengeance—the time to fulfill the last terrible judgment included in this book—has come.

The grandeur of his attitude—his right foot on the sea and his left on the land—revealed him as the mighty Lord of all, Maker and Sovereign of worlds.

3. And cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roareth : and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

4. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

“He cried as a lion roareth;”—the word “when” given in our English version is omitted by all the best authorities.—The word rendered “uttered” is commonly used of speaking articulate words and not of making inarticulate sounds. These thunders (always in the best manuscripts “*the seven thunders,*” v. 3) speak audible, intelligible words, and therefore John at first supposed they were to be written down. The command to “seal them” seems to have meant only—*forbear to write them; seal them up in thine heart; put no word they have spoken on paper.*—Why was this? If it were wrong for us to conjecture, why did they speak at all and why was so much recorded about their speaking?—I have no conjecture to offer save this—that they spake, as none but the seven thunders could speak, of the final fall of Jerusalem, and that the suppression of their words harmonizes essentially with the manner in which the sounding of the seventh angel is given (11: 15), *i. e.*, by implication rather than by explicit assertion; by giving only the thrill of joy it sent through heaven, and not the dark, sad aspect of woful desolation as viewed on the side of human suffering, or the wreck of the once sacred city and temple.

5. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

6. And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer :

7. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

“Lifted up his hand” in the improved text becomes *his right hand*. Lifting the hand toward heaven was the form of the solemn oath, said of Abraham (Gen. 14: 22), and repeatedly of God himself (Ex. 6: 8, and Num. 16: 30, and Deut. 32: 40). The last named passage is emphatic: “For I lift up my hand to heaven and say, I live forever! If I whet my glittering sword and mine hand take hold on judgment,” etc. The coincidence of thought as well as language suggests that this awful passage may have been in the mind of the august speaker in the verse before us.—“That there shall be time no longer” does not mean, no more *time* as compared with eternity, *i. e.*, no longer probation for the race on this earth; but it means precisely, *no longer delay* in the execution of the doom threatened upon the great enemy of Christ’s kingdom. The delay has already been long; it can be protracted no longer!—In verse 7, the translation, “When he shall *begin* to sound,” is not accurate. The original neither makes nor implies any distinction between the beginning of his sounding and the later or closing periods of it. The precise sense is, who shall sound very soon, or more fully, when he shall sound, which will be very soon. This Greek future is made by a special verb [*mello*] for which we have no precise equivalent, but which is used with another verb in the infinitive to qualify it as we use an adverb, and which indicates a future event close at hand. Examples are abundant, *e. g.*, “ready to die” (Luke 7: 2); “at the point of death” (John 4: 47), the same Greek words as the preceding; “were almost ended” (Acts 21: 27); “the things that remain which *are ready to die*” (Rev. 3: 2). So here, “Who is *ready to sound*,” on the very point of sounding, and when he shall do so, then “shall the mystery of God be finished.”—This word “mystery” is used by the New Testament writers of things revealed by the Old Testament prophets which were otherwise inscrutable to human vision. Here the word refers to the judgments long before predicted against the Jewish city and nation for their persistent and most guilty rejection of their Messiah, as in the last two chapters of Isaiah. [See my notes on those chapters.] The language here does not naturally imply (as some have supposed) that *all* the prophecies given by the old prophets were then to be fulfilled, but only this special judgment which had been foreshown by the prophets respecting the retributive judgment of God on that people, once his own by covenant, but then fearfully, utterly, hopelessly apostate.

8. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go *and* take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

9. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take *it*, and eat

it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

10. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

To eat a book is to take its contents into the mind and consider them diligently, or to keep up the figure, "inwardly digest" them. This symbol is imitated from Ezek. 2.—On the question, What precisely is meant by its being sweet in the mouth but bitter and painful after being swallowed, we must choose between these alternatives: (1.) Pleasant in its first impressions and in the first view taken of it, but painful in the subsequent reflection upon it. Or (2.) That some of its revelations were joyous and some were sad; or which amounts nearly to the same thing—that this great event would be joyful in some of its aspects and relations but sad and afflictive in other aspects of it.—I incline to the latter view which certainly applies forcibly to the great truth which was the chief if not the only burden of this little book—viz., the ruin of the city, temple, and civil state of the Jews. This event, seen in its relations to the progress and triumphs of Christianity—seen as a sublime manifestation of God's righteous retribution upon a most guilty people—was glorious to God and fraught with success and victory to Christ's kingdom: but seen on the side of the human sufferings involved in it—seen in the light of the hallowed associations of every Jew with the sacred temple, the holy city, the homes and the sepulchers of the honored fathers, it was bitter to the soul.

11. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Though the scenes of the first book of destiny, and of its "little" supplement, were about to close, yet John is reminded that there are yet other events to be predicted. "Thou must prophesy again," not *before* [in the presence of], but *concerning* people, nations, etc.—i. e., Gentile powers as distinguished from Jews. The language implies that thus far he has prophesied concerning Jews, but that the latter part of his book will treat of Gentile powers.



CHAPTER XI.

In this remarkable chapter, the interest of the first great series of symbols and prophetic events culminates. We reach the crisis and culmination.—Vs. 1, 2 treat of the temple, the altar and

the worshipers; then follows the case of the two witnesses, their functions and powers; their martyrdom and its locality; the exultation over their unburied bodies; their resurrection and ascension to heaven; the consternation of their enemies and the convulsions that ensued (vs. 3-13); the sounding of the seventh angel's trumpet the song of heaven, and the closing scene in the upper temple (vs. 14-19).

1. And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

2. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

When Jeremiah and the old prophets contemplated and predicted the capture of Jerusalem, the fate of the temple could not be overlooked; indeed it was the first and central thought. No one prediction from Jeremiah made so much impression upon the people as that which declared (Jer. 7: 1-15, and 26: 6)—“I will make this house like Shiloh.” So in the present case the temple must needs come to mind before the doom of the city is consummated.—The “reed like a rod” and the measuring of the temple are in imitation of Ezek. 40.—Remarkably the best manuscripts omit the clause, “and the angel stood,” the passage reading literally—“There was given me a reed like a rod, saying,” etc., *i. e.*, one, some one not defined, saying.—As to the significance of this transaction, no other view seems to me admissible save this—that it puts in other symbol what we had in chap. 7: 1-8, viz., the sifting out for salvation of all the precious elements from among the ancient covenant people before the last crushing blow should fall. The Simeons and the Annas, the devout and honest worshipers of the true God, must be carefully measured off and removed away, and possibly the symbol may include the idea that all which is worth preserving in the temple itself and its altar—all its embodied truths, all its symbolic power, all its hallowed associations—must be husbanded with a wise economy and treasured away safely before the storm of ruin shall engulf both city and temple. But the “court without the temple”—always far less holy—leave out; it is given to the Gentiles; the holy city they will tread proudly and insultingly under their feet three years and an half.—The great event predicted here is doubtless the siege and ultimate sack, pillage, and utter destruction of both city and temple by the Romans. The language in part (“trodden under foot”) follows that of Jesus himself (Luke 21: 24): “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles.” But the *time* and in general the symbols take their shape from the very analogous case of the famous desecration of the temple by Antiochus as foretold by

Daniel (8: 10-14, and 11: 31). This accounts for the duration named here—"forty two months"—this being precisely the period given by Daniel, and proximately the duration of the siege and sack of Jerusalem by the Romans.—That Jerusalem is certainly meant by "the holy city," I do not see how any one can reasonably doubt. So of "the temple" and "the altar," we are all afloat if we abandon the literal, normal sense of these words, and consult our fancy for some ideal sense which neither John or his first readers could possibly have thought of. Let us not forget that the writer is a Jew; that he was perfectly at home in whatever pertains to the temple, the altar, its worshipers, the court without and the holy city; that many of his readers also were familiar more or less with the Jewish sense of these words; so that it is simply impossible that they could have given any other sense to these words than what I have here assumed. Consequently here is one of the landmarks of our prophetic interpretation. We *know* that the temple, altar and holy city were standing at the time of this vision; we *know* they were on the very eve of their desolation; we *know* therefore that this desolation—so "shortly" after these visions were seen and recorded—can not possibly be any other than that effected by the Roman armies A. D. 70. It should be some comfort to us to know where we are in *place* and in *time* in this series of prophetic events. It gives a pleasing sense of certainty in the results of our investigations.

3. And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

These two witnesses, here sprung upon us suddenly with no pre- intimation, are prominent and important characters in this series of prophetic events. I hardly need say that the diversity of opinions respecting them among commentators has been almost endless. My readers will excuse me from giving even a catalogue of these discordant opinions, and much more from discussing and combatting them—better pleased that I should labor to present if possible a fair interpretation of the whole passage which will meet all its exigencies and satisfy every reasonable requirement.

I will first state briefly my views of the two witnesses: then explain particular words and phrases throughout the passage; and close with my reasons for adopting this view of their meaning as symbols in preference to any other.

I think these two witnesses are not *literal* but *representative* men; that we are not to look among the apostles or the early Christian martyrs to find precisely the two individual men in whom these conditions shall all meet; nor do I at all accept those more wild theories which make them the Old and the New Testament scriptures; or the Jewish church and the Christian; or the Waldenses and the Albigenses, etc., but I take them as *representative* characters, standing for all those Christian witnesses for the truth

of whom Jesus himself was at the head, and his faithful disciples and apostles, walking in his steps, filled up the ranks till the fall of Jerusalem. The thought doubtless holds closely to those who testified for Christ *before the Jewish nation*—who were the Lord's gospel witnesses, proclaiming to the Jews both its messages of mercy and its threatened doom of judgment unless they should repent. John the Baptist heads the list in time; Jesus, in prominence, dignity and power; but a host of those men—Stephen, James, Peter and Paul, fill up the catalogue.—In a symbolic representation it can not be expected that all these individual men should appear. The number two is chosen probably because "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word" by Jewish law "was established." There may also be a tacit allusion to the historic fact that Jesus sent out his first witnesses two and two into every city. According to Mark (6: 7) the twelve were sent out thus, and according to Luke (10: 1) the seventy.—These remarks will give my general views of these two witnesses.

In the phrase, "I will give power unto my two witnesses," there being no Greek word for "power," it is better to give the phrase a broader sense, perhaps thus: I will commission my two witnesses—I will give them the responsibility of prophesying; or, not improbably, I will give them every help they need—a heart of boldness, words of wisdom—according to Christ's promise: "It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak" (Mat. 10: 19).—"Twelve hundred and sixty days" is itself a symbolic period representing special trial, temptation, conflict. The antecedent historic facts which made this period of three and a half years so memorable, sacred and significant, and which fitted it so admirably for a symbolic type of like trying periods in all coming ages, stand in the book of Daniel—that mournful and most afflictive desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes. With these historic facts in view, standing in a prophecy entirely fresh to the mind of John in Patmos, we need go no further to account for this designation of time. It matters not how long precisely the witnesses represented by these two, did actually testify to the Jews before the fall of their city. To these symbolic representative men is assigned a period which is itself symbolic and suggestive of calamity and trial to God's people.—The numerous theories as to these two witnesses which assume that they lived and prophesied twelve hundred and sixty *years* instead of so many *days* must be discarded as utterly baseless. See the special Dissertation in the Appendix. The same remarks apply to the "forty two months" of v. 2 above.—That they are clothed in sackcloth testifies that they are men of kindred spirit with Elijah and John the Baptist.

4. These are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

The older manuscripts have "Lord" instead of "God;"—"the Lord of all the earth."—The two olive-trees and the two candle-

sticks (lamp-stands) are from Zech. 4, where they represent the two sacred orders—civil rulers and priests—under whose spiritual care God had placed his people and through whom he imparted to them religious truth and spiritual grace. The two witnesses are also God's servants in a similar capacity, doing a similar service to his people. This should suggest that they, like their prototypes, are representative men, symbolic personages.

5. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

This fire from their mouth devouring their enemies, is bold, striking imagery, but not incongruous with the tone of this book. See 9: 17, 18. If we might think of it as literally done, it would make them formidable, not to say terrible to their enemies because they had God on their side and his fearful judgments were sure to fall in terrible retribution upon those who sought their blood.

6. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

The word rendered "power" has more precisely the sense of prerogative—a certain responsible function entrusted to them, correlated to their special work.—In the last clause we might render somewhat more literally, "To smite the land with every plague," etc. The former part of the verse makes an historical allusion to Elijah and the rain (1 Kings 17: 1); the latter part to Moses and the plagues on Egypt (Ex. 7: 19). The case of these witnesses recalls to mind those heroic and divinely honored saints; but we must not too hastily infer that they were to do precisely the same things. In so plain a case of historic allusion, it may be very difficult to decide how closely analogous their actual deeds will be to the historic model. The witnesses were men working in the spirit and power of Elijah and of Moses and in somewhat analogous circumstances—like them having to do with mighty hostile forces, and withstanding them in the strength of the Lord of Hosts. Perhaps this is all we can safely say.

7. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

Shielded by God's protecting providence they live till they have finished their testimony; but then the beast from the bottomless pit prevails against them so far as to take their lives. This beast (not *zoon* but *therion*) corresponds to the "great red dragon" of

the next chapter, *i. e.*, he is Satan himself.—Bearing in mind that Jesus Christ in his earthly life and labor was “the faithful and true Witness”—the first and chief witness for God before the Jewish people, and that his history therefore naturally determines the type of this representative sketch of the two witnesses, we naturally look into his well known history for the leading outlines given here. We remember how through many perils he lived till he had finished his testimony; how Satan then entered into Judas and through Judas betrayed him into bloody hands; how he himself said—“Now is your hour and the power of darkness,” as if well aware that his chief antagonist was Satan, and that in this struggle his own life was to be taken. So of all the martyrs, Satan was really the great murderer. His instigations set wicked men upon this work. He was the Great Leader in this war upon the persons and the lives of the saints.

8. And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

That their dead bodies lie unburied in the streets indicates extreme insult. In the current sentiments of all the ancient nations, no rites were more sacred than those of sepulture; no fate was deemed more dreadful than to lie unburied.—In the general sense of insult, this feature was applicable to Jesus in the matter of his death, while in its precisely literal sense it fails to apply, because by God’s special interposition he was “with the rich in his death” (Isa. 53: 9), and had an honorable burial. But his murderers intended the extremest insult, and in every other point they carried out their purpose. In the *fact*, therefore, the signification of this feature meets his case. A description of two representative witnesses should aim to meet the average features of the great body of those who are represented. This rule is faithfully observed in the points made here.—But the paramount interest and priceless value of this verse are in the fact that it gives us so precisely the *locality*—the *place* where the witnesses fell; the place which was obviously the principal scene of their witnessing testimony. The prophetic finger is carefully put upon the very city. It is one which in view of its spiritual character might be called Sodom (as in Isa. 1: 10) or Egypt as embodied in Pharaoh—his hardened heart resisting God’s authority persistently, despite of a long series of fearful judgments; but dropping all figures of speech, it was precisely the *place where the Lord Jesus was crucified*. This is perfectly definite. No words could be more so. There never was but one city of which this could be said in such a connection as this. What the city was called “spiritually” might indicate it sufficiently to many readers; but to make the identification of the city perfect, and to leave no possibility of mistake, the tongue of inspiration said, “where their Lord also was crucified” and met his death as they met theirs. The improved text gives us here,

"*their* Lord," not "*our*."—As to this locality for the martyrdom of the two witnesses, the reader will readily recall those very significant words of Jesus (Luke 13: 31–35) when certain Pharisees said to him, "Get thee out and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee;" and he replied, "I must walk to-day and to-morrow and the day following (a very short time only, and then my life will be taken here in this guilty city), for it can not be that a prophet perish *outside of* Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, *but ye would not!* Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!" The blood of her murdered prophets and apostles, and greatest of all though not the last in time, the murder of her own Messiah, sealed her doom of unutterable desolation! This fact stands out among the most salient points in this entire chapter. It explains the fact that the murder of the two witnesses within the walls of Jerusalem is the last thing before the blast of the seventh trumpet and the mighty fall of that great city. Other historians may paint the physical agencies—may give us the work of the Roman legions without and of suicidal factions within: but God's prophetic finger sketches the *moral causes*—the damning sins that sealed her doom.

9. And they of the people and kindreds 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 make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

11. And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

Here is the hellish exultation of their murderers over the fallen martyrs. The triumphing of the wicked is always short:—this was. The time designated—three and a half days—follows the symbolic usage of three and a half as the standard period for calamity. Probably the naming of this duration is due mainly if not solely to the influence of this standard usage. There may possibly be a tacit allusion to the interval between Christ's death and his resurrection, commonly called three days.—After the three and a half days, the Spirit of life from God entered into them (the mode of stating the fact follows Ezek. 37: 5–14), and they rise *alive*—to the unutterable consternation of their murderers! Precisely this sudden alternation from diabolic exultation over his death to horror and dread at his rising, must have been the experience of the chief priests and scribes in the case of Christ's death and resurrection. Three days merry and exultant,—then

horror-stricken in amazement and terror!—The unwarranted assumption that prophetic days are really historic years—so often wrought into the interpretation of these witnesses—can lead to nothing but error, misconstruction. See Appendix, Dissertation I.

12. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

I can not resist the conviction that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a sort of ground-work for this part of the representation. In fact his case seems to have been very prominent throughout, as it naturally should be because he was really the foremost and greatest of these witnesses—his life, his preaching and his death having unsurpassed moral significance as bearing upon the doom of the Jewish city and nation. It is therefore entirely natural that the case of these two representative witnesses should receive such a shading, should take on such a type, as would continually suggest the case of Jesus himself as the great model witness. Otherwise it would have missed its main object.—If the reader understands what I have all along been saying, he will not ask me whether I can find any two apostolic witnesses whose dead bodies lay unburied in Jerusalem three days and a half, over whom their murderers exulted so long, but who then rose from the dead and ascended to heaven in the very sight of their astounded murderers! To make such a demand is to ignore the representative, symbolic character of the whole passage and insist that it shall be taken as a literal statement throughout. It might as well be insisted upon that every word, every picture, every symbol in this book of Revelation shall be construed literally.

13. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14. The second woe is past; *and*, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

These convulsions in the material world were most appropriate foretokens of the fearful ruin of the city, and fit premonitions of the blast of the seventh trumpet. That during the siege of the city facts did literally occur to which these points of the representation might correspond, is matter of history; and yet it would be quite another thing to show which out of many earthquakes this was that occurred “on the same hour,” and what “tenth part of the city” it was that fell, etc. Such minuteness of application in a prophecy of this sort should by no means be expected—It is supposable that the case of the Roman “centurion and they that were with him” watching Jesus on the cross, who saw the earth-

quake and the things that were done, and feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Mat. 27: 54) may have thrown its influence into these features of the representation.

Having thus endeavored to explain what is said of these "two witnesses," it remains to state briefly my reasons for adopting this construction rather than the literal one which I understand Prof. Stuart to hold, or any of those vague modern constructions which find these two witnesses in the Old and the New Testament; or in the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations; or in the prophets and the apostles; or in any of the true churches in the dark middle ages; or anywhere else according to the fancy of the interpreter.—(1.) That, as above explained, they are *representative men*, is in harmony with the symbolism of this entire book. Here the fact stated briefly and in general is that the human figures which appear in the scenery of this book are *representative characters*. I adduce the "twenty-four elders," representing glorified saints in heaven; "the hundred and forty-four thousand," sealed from among the Jews, who represent the early Jewish converts to Christianity; the horsemen of 9: 16 who represent the Roman legions, not precisely in point of numbers but of formidable power; the "woman" of chap. 12 who represents the church, and her "man-child," representing Jesus; the woman of chapter 17: 1-7, 18 who represents the great city, Rome. This law of prophetic symbolism seems to be throughout this book universal and invariable. Consequently it ought to apply in the case of these two witnesses. None but the most stubborn difficulties, no reasons save the most stringent, could justify a violation of a law otherwise universal.—(2.) This construction harmonizes with v. 3, which compares these two witnesses to the two olive trees and the two lamp-stands of Zech. 4. This comparison, brought in here to introduce these two witnesses and explain who they represent and how they are to be taken, should be in itself decisive. As those two olive-trees and lamp-stands were *representative* objects, standing for a class of men, so are these.—(3.) This construction has enabled us to interpret the entire passage in a way at once pertinent, facile, natural and forcible. This consideration should of itself have great weight.—(4.) It *harmonizes with the facts of the case*. Such witnessing men did go forth among the Jews to testify the great truths of the gospel. Their mission began properly with John the Baptist, and ended only with the fall of their city. Jesus himself led this witnessing host. Stephen witnessed till, like his Lord's, his murdered body fell in that guilty city. In great numbers these witnesses fell in Jerusalem. But the case covers not those only whose bodies fell there but those who elsewhere, even "in strange cities" (Acts 26: 11), were persecuted by Jews, traduced before the Roman authorities, and brought to a martyr's death.—(5.) It harmonizes with the moral purpose of this prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem. Considered as written to the seven churches, then suffering some degree of persecution and

probably fearing more and sorer yet to come, it could not fail to impress them with the heroic sublimity of the martyr's life and death; with the certainty of a glorious reward; and consequently with the spirit of a lofty faith and a noble Christian endurance. With such an example before them as that of these two witnesses, suggesting so forcibly the witnessing life, the martyr's death and the glorious resurrection of their own Redeemer, how could they shrink before any peril of life that might threaten, or any hardships of prison or exile? Especially when they saw that the blood of martyrs shed in Jerusalem brought down upon that wicked city the exterminating judgments of the Almighty, it must have impressed them with a sense of his righteous retribution upon his incorrigible foes, and assured them that God was on their side in the fullness and glory of his power both to save and to destroy, and that they need not at all fear the final triumph of the wicked because they have their brief moment of fiendish exultation over the men they have vilely and causelessly murdered.—Thus this construction of the entire passage would avail to bring home to the souls of the first readers of this book a grand and most impressive moral power toward steadfast endurance and heroic boldness for the truth, as well as a sense of God's righteous justice and of his certain victory over every foe. Such as these are beyond all doubt the moral purposes of the entire book. The point of my present argument is that this view of the two witnesses coincides perfectly in its moral purpose with the whole book, and therefore must be the true one.—For these reasons, each strong in itself and all united making a complete demonstration, I must accept and maintain that these two witnesses are representative characters, standing for the noble band of witnesses for Christianity, sent of God to his ancient people with his last appeal before the fall of their city and temple.

15. And the seventh angel sounded; 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.

16. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God,

17. Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

18. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and the saints, and to them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet should be a crisis, a great consummation. The seven seals are all broken; the seventh and last was resolved into seven trumpets and here we have reached the last of these. Hence some signal events are here. What is this crisis? If a catastrophe, *i. e.*, a great convulsion, a mighty ruin, the question arises—A convulsion of what sort? A ruin of what? If the result be only joyful, *why* is it so, and *what* is the ground of the joy?—All commentators concur in finding some extraordinary event in this seventh trumpet. Many think it to be the beginning of the Millennium, or the final judgment at the end of this world, and the opening of a new order of existence for the redeemed. Hence there is special interest and importance in this question—*What is this seventh trumpet?*

My view is that in its primary sense and application, it is precisely *the fall of Jerusalem before the Roman arms*—Jerusalem being considered as the grand antagonist power against Christianity in that early Christian age.—I shall attempt to justify this view by showing: (1.) That this description (vs. 15-18), fairly and scripturally interpreted, not only admits but demands this interpretation;—and (2.) That the course of the preceding seals and trumpets and the slaying of the witnesses brings us precisely to this great event—to no point short of this and to no point beyond it.

1. It should be carefully noted that the results of this seventh trumpet are shown us *only as seen and felt in heaven*. The prophet does not give us one word nor one symbol which represents things seen or done on earth, save as we may infer them from what is said and sung by the hosts above. He first hears great voices in heaven and tells us what they said; then more definitely the twenty-four elders (representatives of the church on earth) take up their song of thanksgiving and with several new particulars set forth the occasion and grounds of their joy in this event by reciting what God had so gloriously done. It is only from these sources that we learn precisely the things revealed under the seventh trumpet.—Again, it should be carefully noted that these heavenly hosts contemplate this event *only on its joyous side—only as bearing upon the progress and triumphs of Messiah's kingdom*. There may have been another side to the scene, one of fearful catastrophe; of awful carnage; of utter wreck to human hopes and affections—to the life and the heart of a great nation; but of this entire side of the case, these heavenly songs say nothing. Yet it would be a very strange inference (it has been made often) that should conclude from the silence of heaven's songs as to any catastrophe, that there actually was none. Why should it surprise us that those holy ones before the throne should think of the fall of the first, most obstinate and most malign opponents of the gospel as a glorious triumph of Immanuel, and should contemplate this event only on its Godward side—only as related to the retributions of his glorious justice and to the triumphs of truth and salvation over all the earth? I acquiesce most entirely in this view

of their song and believe this to have been the light in which they contemplated the fall of apostate Judaism and of its representative city.

Let us now turn to the words heard in heaven.—In the phrase, “The kingdoms of this world,” etc., the oldest manuscripts and the concurrent voice of the best critics give the singular, “The *kingdom* of this world,” the precise sense therefore being that the *rule*, the *sway* of this world, rather than the civil power over its several kingdoms, passes into the hand of our Lord.—The just interpretation of this language must be learned from Old Testament prophecy and New Testament usage. I can present this matter here only by the briefest allusions, *e. g.*, to Gen. 49: 10, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah . . . till Shiloh [the Messiah] come; him shall the people obey:” to Ps. 2: 8, “Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance:” to Ezek. 21: 27, “I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is and I will give it him;” or to the scope of Daniel’s series of great world monarchies which terminate with giving to the Messiah “dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him, and his dominion be an everlasting dominion,” etc.—In New Testament usage Jesus takes up this term, “kingdom,” and this strain of promise, from the Old Testament prophets, and speaks during his life-time of his kingdom as just at hand. The apostles after his ascension spake of it as already set up. If we examine this matter quite carefully, we shall see that the divine forces to be used in establishing this kingdom were essentially twofold: the *spiritual*, of which the gift of the Holy Ghost was central; and the *physical*, to be employed under God’s providential rule in the destruction of opposing powers, and first and most prominent of all, apostate Judaism and its stronghold, Jerusalem. Hence the kingdom of the Messiah was in one important sense given to him upon his formal inauguration in heaven at his ascension; and yet in its human aspect and development, its date properly turned on two grand events: (1.) The descent of the Holy Ghost, revealing and bringing into the great field of spiritual work this divine power; and (2.) The overthrow of Jerusalem—the first grand manifestation of the physical, material forces—the first putting forth of the great hand of God to sweep away opposing powers and to foil Satan in the very point of his chief antagonism.—It will be noticed that in several passages Jesus speaks of his “coming” when the connection and the circumstances compel us to apply this word to his powerful hand in the overthrow of Jerusalem. Thus, Mat. 16: 28, “There be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom:” and in Mat. 24: 3, 34, to the question, “What shall be the sign of thy coming?” Jesus answered in various particulars, and then said, “Verily, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” The leading thought in this chapter is that with which it

begins—the destruction of the city and temple.—The New Testament conception therefore of Christ's setting up his kingdom on the earth gives us, on the side of its spiritual forces, the descent of the Holy Ghost; on the physical side, the overthrow of Jerusalem. These were great, central, representative events, and they serve not only to date the *beginning* of his kingdom, so that it could be said *after* these events to have come, or to be set up, but they are the precursor, the pledge, the prophecy of further victories—the grand assurance of final and perfect victory over every foe, even till Jesus shall rule, one and alone, sole King and Lord of all the earth. No doubt it is somewhat in this prospective aspect and bearing of this first event, considered as foreshadowing and guaranteeing other like victories onward in future time, that the song of heaven is so exultant. This very song is a prophecy. It seizes upon the first grand display of God's providential forces in the destruction of his antagonist, and confidently forecasts the final and perfect victory. Thus I understand the meaning of the great voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and he shall reign forever and ever." The elders, speaking for the ransomed already gathered home before the throne, give thanks to God that at length he has taken to himself his great power and has begun to exert it.—Their enumeration of particulars (v. 18) should be carefully noted: "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath has come." The allusion here is to Ps. 2: 1: "Why do the heathen [the *nations*] rage?" taken up by Peter (Acts. 4: 25, 26): "Who by the mouth of David hast said, Why did the heathen rage?" etc. "The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together," etc. The vital fact was that when God brought forth his anointed Son into this world to make him "Lord of all," the nations were enraged and took his life; and now God's wrath is come upon them in righteous but terrible retribution! The correspondence in the language is half obscured by our English translation, which should have preserved the relation between their wrath and God's wrath by translating either, "The nations were angry and thine anger has come;" or, "The nations were wroth, and thy wrath has come." The idea is that God met them hand to hand with their own weapons. They persecuted his Son and his people unto blood: God meets them with his opposing forces unto blood! They had madly cried, "Crucify him! and if there is any blood to be shed for it, let it be the blood of ourselves and of our children!" whereupon the Almighty took up their challenge, and now the blood of the slain Jesus has come upon them and their children, till there is no spot unstained in all that doomed city!—"And the time of the dead that they should be judged"—not of all the dead indiscriminately, good and bad, and of all the ages; but specifically, as to the point

in hand—the time of the dead martyrs, whose cry for this very judgment we heard from under the altar at the opening of the fifth seal. It was told them that there was to be a short delay, and then judgment would fall upon their persecutors; God's cause would be avenged, and his and their foes must fall. Now, therefore, appropriately, the twenty-four elders, who heard that prayer of the martyred dead, allude to the fact that the time has come at length! So the next clause plainly implies: "And that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, small and great." Not to the old Hebrew prophets alone, though they are in a sort included, as we may have noticed in Christ's own allusion to the moral causes which demanded the fall of Jerusalem: "Thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent [apostles] unto thee" (Mat. 23: 34-38). All the martyred dead—the two slain witnesses and all the host whom they represent—all the persecuted, afflicted ones, small or great, are now to have their reward in the fearful, significant, yet joyful overthrow of this first and chief antagonist of Christ in his kingdom. The Almighty God has come down to destroy them that are morally destroying the land, whose crimes have made society rotten to the core, who have broken down all civil law, all wholesome restraint upon the most diabolic passions of depraved human hearts. Almost never on the face of human history have men seen a more terrible significance to the words, "them that destroy the earth" [land], than is shown in the history of Palestine during the lapse of the generation which perished within the walls of Jerusalem on her fall.—Thus it appears that this description of the events of the seventh trumpet, when scripturally interpreted, not only admits but demands the construction which applies it to the fall of Jerusalem.

2. It remains to show that the course of the preceding seals and trumpets has brought us precisely to this great event—to no point short of it, and to no point beyond.

Let us begin with the date of this book, the actual present of the writer, which must be put about A. D. 65. Then "the things that must shortly come to pass," "for the time is at hand," must commence very soon. Then the first four seals describe scenes so closely analogous to the events predicted by Christ as immediately preceding the fall of Jerusalem that we can not mistake in applying them also to those times. The martyrs whose souls are seen under the altar at the opening of the fifth seal were to wait yet but a little season ere God would hear their prayer, and judge and avenge their blood on their persecutors and murderers. Here, under the seventh trumpet "the time of the dead [martyrs] that they should be judged" (11: 18) has fully come. This "yet for a little season" can not carry us beyond the fall of Jerusalem; it can not close earlier than that event. Then the sealing of the one hundred and forty-four thousand (chap 7) must be the rescuing of a great multitude of Jews by their cordial reception of Jesus,

who thus yielded to the testifying and exhorting of Peter (Acts 2: 40) when he said, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." This gathering in of Jewish converts was mainly closed up before the blast of ruin swept over their city.—The sixth seal sets forth unutterable terror and dread.—Of the seven trumpets developed from the seventh seal, the first four portend the gathering storm, set forth the skirmish fires, the flying charges that precede the grand assault. The fifth trumpet foretold rather torture than death—men's hearts trembling under woeful anticipations and that sinking of hope into the bitterness of despair which befell the Jews when their destiny to national ruin became inevitable, corresponding to the point made by Christ touching the same period—"men's hearts failing them for fear." Then the sixth trumpet set forth the gathering hosts of Roman legions closing in upon the doomed city. Must not this be the last precursor of the final crisis?—But two things more are to be shown; the symbol of the temple and altar measured out for salvation, and the court given over to the Gentiles to be trodden under their heathen feet; and then the history of the two witnesses—their mission, their martyrdom, the contempt heaped upon their unburied remains, their glorious resurrection and the preliminary crash upon the great city that ensued;—all these things are the last immediate precursors of the final fall of that city long spared and warned and wept over by the Great Man of Sorrows, but hopelessly incorrigible and therefore hopelessly doomed to ages of desolation! The time has come for the bolts of vengeance to leap from the hand of the Almighty; the strong angel has solemnly affirmed with hand uplifted—"There shall be delay no longer;"—therefore we are brought to precisely the crisis of her final fall: the seventh angel's trumpet involves it—nothing less; nothing more.

It may not be amiss to suggest two other thoughts, viz., (1.) that the omission in this passage of all symbols of destruction—of all effort to paint the final crash of the falling city and nation—may be itself implied in the prohibition, "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered and write them not" (10: 4). Also (2.) that rhetorically this omission is sublimely grand. The power of awful symbol would seem to have been exhausted already. It is not easy to conceive how any thing more appalling or more dreadful could have been devised, worthy of the momentous catastrophe. In such an emergency, silence is wisdom; or rather, it is wise to forbear any attempt to present the fearful catastrophe in darker colors. The perfection of art and skill is now to leave the rest to the imagination, and let men infer it from the impressions it makes upon the holy witnesses thereof before the throne—the enraptured songs that thrill all heaven in the sublimely grand forecast of the Great Conqueror's triumph!

19. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and

there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

As heaven was opened to the seer at the beginning of this great series of prophetic visions (4: 1), a yet nearer view is perhaps indicated here by the setting open of the heavenly temple. Obviously it is the holy of holies, the most holy apartment of the temple, that is here opened to view, for within it is seen "the ark of the covenant," the sacred symbol of God's perpetual relationship to his covenant people as their faithful God. It was a precious thought to the pious Jew that the holy places and things made with human hands were only the patterns of things in the heavens where was a holier temple, a more sacred altar, a more glorious ark of the covenant overshadowed with sublimer wings of cherubim, and disclosing a far more august splendor of the visible glory. This conception seems to be assumed here; the open door into that upper temple brings to this seer's view especially the heavenly ark of the covenant—the standing witness in this case that God remembered his true and enduring people, and had sent his angel of destruction down with the judgments of retribution upon their persecutors.—"There were lightnings, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail;"—and what were these but the echoes of the dreadful storm of divine vengeance foretold by the blast of the seventh trumpet? These convulsive heavings and throbbings of the great heart of nature were in sympathy with the divine indignation against the awful wickedness which had murdered the Son of God and which had long made Jerusalem crimson with the blood of prophets and apostles and martyrs for Jesus. Similar convulsions of nature appeared (see 8: 3-5) when the smoke of incense significant of the prayers of saints went up before God out of the angel's hand, and he filled his censor with fire of the altar and cast it to the earth; then "there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake." Yet more precisely analogous were the scenes when the seventh angel "poured out his vial into the air (16: 17, 18), and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven from the throne, saying, It is done!" Great Rome is foredoomed to fall! Then "there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great." Why should not these mighty agencies of the material world, God's ready servants, manifest their sympathy with the will and the emotions of their omnipotent Maker and Sovereign? When his infinite mind kindles to the demands of a righteous indignation and a terrible retribution upon the incorrigibly guilty, why should not all nature speak out with her voice of thunder and let her lightnings blaze and make the solid earth shake to her foundations? Such demonstrations are most befitting; they are the witness which all nature bears to her sympathy with her King.

Here the curtain falls and the first grand drama of this apocalyptic book closes. The first great antagonist power which sought to strangle Christianity in its birth was practically wiped out. That malign, invincible hate which could not bear the pungent rebukes of Jesus while he lived, which would not receive God's word from his lips, which pursued him unto death, and then pursued his followers with like rage, "breathing out threatening and slaughter," and which according to history excited persecution against the faithful witnesses for Christ wherever they went, had gone to the full length of its line, and at this fatal point had encountered the Almighty God and must needs drink the cup of his retributive vengeance! That bloody and morally hardened city has gone down with a crash of destruction: there is joy in heaven over her fall! It witnesseth that the kingdom of Jesus Messiah is victorious: it prophesieth that every foe of this kingdom must fall; and all the holy around the throne above have joy therein!

Before I close this first main division of the book and pass on to the second, I must pause for a moment to say in support of the interpretation above given—

1. That only one system of interpreting this book *can be true*. If this be the true one, then no other system, entirely unlike this can be.

2. That I have no heart for polemic commentary. It may sometimes be a duty to bring up and expose the errors of interpretation into which I judge that good men have fallen; but it can never be a *pleasant* duty; and for the most part I have purposely left it undone, comforting myself with this view of the case: that presenting and sustaining the true interpretation will satisfy intelligent minds better. If the interpretation presented is adequately supported and intelligently accepted, no adverse system can have like adequate support, and therefore may be left to fall by its own weight.

3. I therefore close this statement of my views respecting the first great persecuting power of this book by calling the reader's attention to the principles and laws of interpretation laid down in the Introduction. *Have they, or have they not, been fairly and faithfully carried out?*

(1.) First in the order of place and in my view first in importance, is the rule—"Come to this book to learn what it teaches; not to make it teach what you will." On this point all I can or need say is that I have diligently sought to make the book its own interpreter and to keep my mind free from all preconceived theories whatever. Each reader will judge how far this purpose may seem to have been fulfilled.

(2.) By the second rule the predictions of the book must be interpreted *in harmony with God's own declarations as to the time of their fulfillment*.—In language which must legitimately apply to the great body of this book, and therefore certainly to the entire

prophetic portion now gone over (chaps. 4-11), the divine author has said, "the things must shortly come to pass;" "the time is at hand." Our interpretation makes the time short—probably not exceeding five years at farthest. Yet this period of time, declared of God to be "short" and "near at hand," is made by some systems of interpretation about two thousand years! They stretch the prophetic events of these chapters (4-11) down to the Millennium, and some of them beyond it, even to the final judgment! Have they not altogether overstepped the limitations which God himself has set?—This mistake is the more palpable and the less excusable because those interpreters do not even claim that they find any counter or qualifying statements declaring that the time contemplated for the fulfillment of any of these prophecies (chaps. 4-19) is *not* short but long. There is *no such counter testimony*, in like manner definite and precise, over against these averments that the time is *short*. Therefore the assumption that the time is long is not only opposed squarely to God's own statements, but has nothing definite in this part of the book to rest upon—nothing whatever but the demand of a preconceived scheme of interpretation!

(3.) The third rule insists that when God interprets his own symbols, we must accept and follow his interpretation.—So far as these divine interpretations appear in the Old Testament, the symbols used here being manifestly found and interpreted there, the case comes under our eighth rule.—Instances of symbols interpreted in this book directly will occur more abundantly in subsequent chapters. We have one of no small importance in chap. 11: 4, which explains the two witnesses by comparing them to "the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the whole earth"—with unquestionable reference to Zech. 4, and showing therefore that these two witnesses are representative characters, not individual men; and that their function is that of revealing the true light of God—preachers of his word and ministers of his grace to mankind. I have interpreted the two witnesses accordingly.

(4.) The fourth rule binds us to interpret *in harmony with whatever allusions the book contains to known historic events and localities.*

In its description of those who are saved out of the ruin there implied, the seventh chapter gives us the usual well defined historic distinction between Jews and Gentiles—one hundred and forty-four thousand *Jews*; and then "a great multitude that no man could number of all nations," who of course are *Gentiles*. Consequently this prophecy refers to a period when converts to Christ were gathered from both Jews and Gentiles, and therefore shuts off many schemes of construction which at this point have reached far beyond the apostolic age, even down to the sixth or eighth century, where no history gives any notice of conversions from the Jews.

In chap. 11 these historic allusions stand out with great distinct-

ness. Here is the temple still standing, but very near its fall; here is the very city of Jerusalem, designated spiritually as a second Sodom or Egypt, but literally as precisely the place where the Lord was crucified—allusions therefore that positively fix the *place* and the *time* of these great events which are the climax and consummation of the plagues foretold thus far in this book. It is not easy to see how God could put the finger of prophecy more squarely upon Jerusalem and its once holy but now desecrated temple than he has done here. Coupled with the general limitation of the great events of this book—"near at hand"—these historic allusions to *time* and *place* are surely decisive. I have therefore interpreted accordingly. Moved and guided by the one supreme purpose to follow God's own teaching, how could I interpret otherwise?

(5.) Our fifth rule requires that we follow whatever indications the book may give to show that Christians then or recently living were the martyrs to whom it refers, and their persecutors the men whose destruction is here foreshown.—Bearing in mind that all these things were shortly to come to pass, and comparing what is said in the special letter to Smyrna (2: 10), and in that to Pergamos (2: 13), with the scenes at the opening of the fifth seal (6: 9-11), it seems to me clear that John's first readers must have understood those martyred saints to be of their own age and from their own churches; and of course their persecutors were also men of their own times. Consequently I have felt bound to interpret accordingly. This limitation shuts off all those schemes of interpretation which find the fifth seal far along in the Christian centuries from four to six or eight hundred years after Christ.

(6.) Our sixth rule recognizes the fact that several successive seals are broken before the prophecy gives any definite name or clue to the parties intended—either to the Christians who suffered, or to their persecutors whom God would smite with plagues; and it infers from this silence that the first readers of the book, remembering what was said of the time being near at hand, would know who were meant without any precise naming. They understood their own times. The limitations with which the book both opens and closes held them to their own times for both these parties—the Christians martyred, and the wicked men who murdered them. The omission of both their names and locality through so many chapters is readily accounted for on this assumption. Our interpretation has been put in harmony with this principle or law of interpretation.

(7.) The book has an obvious moral purpose, viz., to sustain and inspire the faith, courage and endurance of Christians in peril from persecution. We must interpret in harmony with this most obvious moral purpose. We do so when we find the events *very near their own times* and *their own homes*, for such events always thrill men's souls intensely. Following this rule, we must assume that they in the main *understood the book*; consequently that it

spake of things then near at hand, and did not speak of things entirely beyond the range of their possible knowledge. This rule therefore practically shuts off all those schemes of interpretation which run these prophetic events onward down through the subsequent centuries, even to the end of the world.

(8.) Our eighth rule demands that symbols borrowed from the Old Testament should be construed in general harmony with their usage there.—Accordingly I have interpreted the horses of the first four seals in harmony with their prototypes in Zech. 1 and 6, grouping them to give one comprehensive idea, here as there, and not dissociating them utterly and spreading them out over whole centuries of human history.—The sealing of the thousands (in chap. 7) I found in Ezekiel's similar marking of holy men, and construed accordingly.—The "books," both the first with its seven seals, and the second, the "little book," I trace to Ezekiel's roll, and therefore take to be prophetic disclosures of impending judgments.—The descriptive points given of the two witnesses are obviously gathered from sacred history, either of the Old Testament or of the New. I have interpreted accordingly.

(9.) And finally I have aimed, especially in the closing verses of chap. 11, to use freely and yet not abuse that great law of prophecy by which the mind passes over by analogy from a nearer event to events remote, but in their great underlying principles similar. Thus the songs of heaven upon the fall of Jerusalem sweep over the ages and grasp the downfall of every great opposing force, and take in the glorious inspirations of the final triumph of Christ over all the powers of darkness, sin and Satan. Thus those sublime words both fill their place as related to the immediate catastrophe which called them forth, and also follow the law of numerous Old Testament prophecies in rising grandly from the particular to the general—from the one limited but typical, foreshadowing event, to the grand and final consummation of all gospel labors and conflicts—the reign of Jesus Messiah, supreme and universal.



CHAPTER XII.

A new subject comes before us; new scenes open and new symbols appear.—This chapter raises three preliminary questions:—(1.) Who are the three leading personages here:—the woman, her child, and the great red dragon?—(2.) Why are these scenes shown the prophet *as located in heaven*, since the transactions are located chiefly on earth?—(3.) What was the object sought in thus going back to matters of earlier history—the birth of Christ; the persecutions raised against him and his people, etc?

(1.) These personages are in my view *representative characters*, the woman representing the church; her child, the Messiah; and the great dragon, "the old serpent," Satan. That the church should be represented as a woman comes by imitation from the old Hebrew prophets, especially Isaiah. See chaps. 49: 20-23, and 54: 1-6, and 62: 4, 5, and 66: 7-12. In all these passages except the last named, the offspring of the woman are her converts, and especially Gentile Christians coming to her in thronging hosts, crowding her tent-room and bringing riches, glory, honor and joy to her happy household. But in Isa. 66: 7 we have this remarkable language which seems to have been in the mind of the revealing Spirit in this chapter: "Before her pain came she was delivered of a man-child."—It is pertinent to refer also to passages where the birth of the Messiah is definitely predicted, and of course, of some mother in the ancient Jewish church; *e. g.*, Isa. 7: 14. "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel;"—also 9: 6: "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of peace." Also Mic. 5: 2-4: "Out of Bethlehem shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel," etc. "Therefore shall he give them up until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth," etc.; "and he shall stand and feed" [like a shepherd] "in the strength of the Lord," etc. Both these sets of passages seem to have been before the mind of John, the former class giving the church representatively as a mother; the latter presenting her offspring, the *one* man-child, the promised Messiah.—That this child in the chapter before us is the Messiah is shown plainly in v. 5;—was "to rule all nations with a rod of iron"—a very obvious allusion to the prophecy, Psalms 2: 7-9; and "caught up" [after his resurrection] "unto God and to his throne;" exalted to supreme power there.—The "great dragon" is sharply defined and identified in vs. 9, 10, as we shall see.

(2.) Why are these scenes shown to the prophet *in heaven*, since for the most part they are transacted on the earth?—These prophetic visions seem to have brought heaven and earth very near together and to have shown their wonderfully intimate relations to each other. While most of them are located in heaven, the scenes are occasionally shifted to earth with striking facility (*e. g.*, chap. 10: 1, 2, 4, 5, and 11: 1, 2, etc.). All these prophetic events originate in the great plan and purpose of God and therefore, in a vital sense, have their *source* in heaven. Hence when the object was to lead the prophet up to the fountain-head, the spring whence these streams of influence proceed, he must needs be taken up to heaven.—Finally, it was deemed important no doubt to show the prophet how deeply these matters pertaining to the earthly Zion take hold of the sympathies of all the holy around the infinite throne. Hence there was the utmost perti-

nence and fitness in thus laying the scenes of these symbols in heaven.

(3.) I have in part anticipated my third point so far forth as respects the object sought in locating these scenes in heaven. It remains to speak of the object sought in going back historically to the birth of the Messiah and its attendant circumstances. In my view the object was to show the persecuted saints of that age where the fiery persecutions they feared or suffered had their origin; to fix their eye on that "old serpent" who began his diabolic work in Eden, who tasked his utmost hellish art and power to crush the infant Jesus, and indeed to tempt the man Jesus, both first at the beginning of his public ministry, and last, near its close, in the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary. It was well for them to be reminded that Jesus had been in this fight before them and had personally conquered! It was well for them to know where the great battle-field now lay, and that this was *their* time for valiant fight and steadfast endurance even if need be unto blood! One of the prime objects in this entire chapter is manifestly to put the devil in his true light as the chief persecutor, the arch-traitor and rebel against the throne of God—the chieftain who heads all the sin and all the war against God and goodness which appear in the universe. Let all Christians know their enemy; let them know his past history, his present designs, his determined antagonism to the Messiah and to his church and people; and his certain defeat and shameful fall in the end.—Such are the high and morally useful purposes sought in this chapter.

Accordingly we have here the woman and her peculiar condition (vs. 1, 2); the dragon and his followers (vs. 3, 4); the birth of the man-child, etc. (v. 5); the woman-mother protected (v. 6); the great battle in heaven and its immediate results (vs. 7, 8); the dragon identified and cast out (v. 9); the consequent joy and songs in heaven (vs. 10, 11); the devil on earth persecuting the woman (vs. 12, 13); the fight prolonged (vs. 14-17).

1. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

2. And she being with child cried, travailling in birth, and pained to be delivered.

"A great wonder"—an object which excited great attention, perhaps great surprise—a personage of most striking appearance.—Her array and adorning seem to come from the Song of Solomon (6: 4, 10), "Looking forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun," etc. "The twelve stars" may have a tacit reference to the twelve tribes of the ancient Zion.—The human birth and incarnation of the Messiah seem to be presented thus mainly for the purpose of showing the great dragon in his true relations to Christ and to all Christ's work and people.

3. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

“Dragon” [Greek, *Drakōn*] is but another name for a great serpent. “Red” may signify his bloody spirit and purpose; his seven heads betoken extreme cunning; and his ten horns a very formidable power. The crowns or diadems upon his heads show him to be the Prince among the spirits of darkness and rebellion.

4. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

“His tail drew the third part,” etc.; he led the first rebellion in the universe.—“The stars of heaven”—among and of those “morning stars” of whom it is said (Job 38: 7) that on the birth of our world they “sang together and shouted for joy.” The usage of the word “star” for a distinguished personage appears elsewhere (Num. 24: 17, and Isa. 14: 12).—Whether the relative number stated here—one-third part—gives us proximately the extent of that fearful rebellion in heaven, is perhaps too much for us to affirm. It may be so. It is however more clear that the writer speaks in derision of their obsequiousness and servility in meekly following the great head rebel—“*his tail drew them!*” Would it not have been incomparably more noble for them to have stood fast in their allegiance to heaven’s glorious King than so meekly to suffer themselves to be drawn into most guilty rebellion by the dragon’s tail!—The dragon deemed it a great point of strategy to seize the infant child as soon as born and crush him there in his weakness. But a higher and sharper mind than his saw through his plan and thwarted it.

5. And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

As already indicated this can be no other than the incarnate Messiah, born of a human mother, yet here thought of as born of the ancient Zion church, the product of her faith and prayer, the gift of God to his waiting church according to long standing promise and covenant.—The descriptive clause, “Rule all nations with a rod of iron,” comes from Ps. 2: 9. It should be specially noted that the Greek verb here combines the two ideas, of ruling and of feeding as a *shepherd*. The aspect of iron power comes from what was specially peculiar and prominent in David who stands in that second psalm as a controlling type of Christ. David as king was distinguished for subduing the long standing and fearfully annoying enemies of Israel on every side. He was

a man of blood. In certain aspects of his character his greater Son must be like him; and those aspects are necessarily rather prominent in this book of Revelation, since it treats mostly of the fearful judgments with which Jesus, the King of kings, will crush the great persecuting forces of that age. It must not be inferred that the rule of Christ over the nations which constitutes his promised reign in his gospel kingdom will be "with a rod of iron," for obviously Christ is thought of here as destroying his enemies by his agencies in providence—not as ruling in and over his church by his Spirit and his truth.—"Caught up to God and to his throne," is an admirable presentation in vision of God's protecting care of the infant Jesus; yet the history shows that this was not precisely the *manner* of that protection. The infant was made fully as safe against the dragon *as if* he had been taken up bodily and at once to the heavenly throne.

6. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days.

This fleeing into the wilderness for shelter looks back historically to Israel brought out of Egypt and sheltered in perfect safety in that wilderness of Arabia where no Egyptian army could possibly subsist, and of course could not follow them—on the margin of which indeed they found their grave in the waters of the Red Sea. Somewhat in the same way Hosea says (2: 14) "I will bring her into the wilderness and there will I speak to her heart"—making it a place for moral discipline, and hence for real salvation. But here the main idea is that of protection against the dragon. There may perhaps be a tacit allusion to the flight of Christians, shortly before the siege of Jerusalem, into the mountain region across the Jordan.—The duration of this period—twelve hundred and sixty days—comes evidently from Daniel where this period became historic, as the length of Zion's bitter trial and persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes. We have no occasion to inquire for precisely the same historic duration of either the church's protection or of her suffering under persecution. God kept her in that wilderness as long as the occasion demanded. It was a time which naturally suggested the similar period in the history of the Maccabees and their heroic countrymen.—To interpret these days to mean years is just as baseless in prophecy as it would be in history. See the Dissertation in the Appendix. This remark applies equally to v. 14 below.

7. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

8. And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

It seems to be implied that when the man-child was caught up to heaven the great dragon carried the war thither, striking for the murder of the infant child there. It may possibly refer more definitely to the scenes which immediately followed the great revolt, since we can not suppose that after they had taken arms against God, they could be permitted to remain in heaven. Probably it is safest to say that we need not look for precise historical accuracy in such a symbolic representation. It may not be amiss to suggest that all which is said here of Satan's relation to *place* should be taken as symbolic and representative rather than literal and historic; for what can we know yet of the relation of spirit to place?—A fierce and desperate battle was fought over the new-born Messiah: holy angels and devilish angels were the opposing hosts, and the victory turned gloriously on Zion's side.—The allusion in v. 10 to "the accuser of our brethren" as "cast down" from heaven, which manifestly looks somewhat to the history of Job and Satan, seems to assume that the battle-ground is shifted from heaven to earth—the battle, I mean, *over the saints of God*.—"Prevailed not" means, were conquered. And they could find no longer any place in heaven.

9. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him:

We may well note the pains taken to identify the "great dragon" by accumulating all his various names, somewhat as a criminal indictment against a villain who has various assumed names will carefully include them all with each its "alias" to introduce it. The "great dragon" was known as "the old serpent" in the record of the fall in Eden. He had a well earned "alias" in the name Diabolus—the devil—in the sense of "an accuser of the brethren" (v. 10), having played this part in early times against Job. Another "alias" he had honestly won for himself in the name "Satan"—a *malicious hater*, both of God and of all the good—angels or men. Such are his significant names, grouped together here to suggest to the reader the various points of his past history as given in the Bible. This dragon, the writer would say, is the same old enemy of God and man of whom you have heard so often—ever the same, though under names however many and various. You will see that his perpetual mission on earth is that of deception and lies, whereby he "deceiveth the whole world"—its Great Prince—"the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Let all the churches know him and know only to detest and resist him. He is hurled down from heaven to earth, one stage in that fearful fall midway from heaven to hell, giving assurance that the same power which cast him headlong from heaven will ere long plunge him from earth into the bottomless abyss—"his own place."

10. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

This grand defeat of Satan sends a thrill of joy through heaven. It is not only a fact but a prophecy—a fact which itself foretokens other victories of like sort, only more and more effective and decisive, tending more and more rapidly to the grand consummation—the utter crushing out of Satan and his hosts and the final deliverance of the earth from his dominion.—This “loud voice” seems to come from some representative of the glorified saints in heaven—perhaps from one of the twenty-four elders, for he says, “The accuser of *our brethren*.” Certainly his interest and sympathy are thoroughly with the sons of Zion who are yet in the fight on the earth.—It seems to have been deemed one advantage gained over Satan that he is hurled down from heaven, where he had availed himself of his high position “to accuse the brethren before God day and night.” He is now branded as a slanderer and made to fight thenceforward under his true colors.—The language in v. 11 seems to assume that the combatants in the great battle with Satan were redeemed saints, who fought the good fight of faith, and conquered through the blood of the Lamb and through staunch endurance and heroic witnessing for Christ and his gospel. Their example thus put must have been a sublime moral power upon the churches of Asia in their then pending conflict under the fear or the pressure of persecution.—Or may it be supposed that under the license admissible in symbolic vision, Michael and his angels are thought of as taking up this fight *just as if* they were themselves of the redeemed of earth, and so personating the saved of our race, fighting for them and as they must needs fight, in order to set forth the grand idea that the victory over Satan, whether in heaven or on earth, is evermore *through the blood of Christ* and through heroic endurance for his name? We may remember that when Jesus was about to close his earthly life by that most eventful death, in that prospective view which gave him the results of Gethsemane and Calvary, he said (Jn. 12: 31), “Now shall the Prince of this world be cast out.” On an earlier occasion, when the seventy came in from their first mission, saying with joyful surprise, “Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name,” he replied, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10: 18).

12. Therefore rejoice, *ye heavens*, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea!

for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

“Woe to you, all ye of the earth and of the sea, for the great moral battle-field is transferred from heaven to earth! Satan goes down among you; the fight is to be on your soil; and you should know that he is fearfully exasperated, in great wrath. Having failed in the conflict above, he makes his last desperate stand on the earth, and he ‘knows that his time is short!’”——But “short” is a relative term. To what other time does it here stand related? Is it a short time within which he may possibly destroy the infant Jesus? or a short time in which he may consume the young and feeble Christian church by the hot fires of persecution? or a short time even though reaching to his being bound with the great chain as in Rev. 20? Or may it be short on the dial of eternity though stretching to the end of this world? The second of these suppositions—a short time yet for his most hopeful fight against the new-born Christian church—seems to me most probable because most in harmony with the logic of the context and with the obvious sense of the word “short.” It accounts for the fierceness of those terrible persecutions, and rings out a note of warning as well as consolation to all imperiled believers. Stand to your post staunchly, for the fight will be terrific, but it will be *short!*

13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child.

When he saw himself cast out of heaven and frustrated in his purpose against the man-child, he turned his Satanic hate and power against the woman. It became an era of fierce persecution. Let all Christians know that the persecutions they fear or suffer come originally from the devil. It is only a part of his great antagonism against the Infinite God and his eternal Son. Such a view of it assures the Christian heart of victory at last, and would show the weakest saint who are his powerful allies and co-workers in the fight.

14. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

16. And the earth helped the woman; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Here as in v. 6 the woman is conceived of in symbol as finding refuge in the wilderness. I see no occasion to tie down the significance of this symbol to the flight of the Christian Jews to the mountains across the Jordan for safety against the Roman arms. It is doubtful whether it has any special reference to that event. Its historical allusion is obviously to Israel in her Arabian wilderness, and its significance here is simply that the same God who of old helped his people to safety and to a thousand other blessings in a vast wilderness even for forty years, can and will do a like thing in this age of hot and fearful persecution.—The “wings as of a great eagle” made her flight from a crawling serpent comparatively easy. As the old serpent found himself distanced so easily and so utterly by a winged woman, he pours out a flood like a river that (as the Greek has it) he might make drifting flood-wood of the woman. But God had means of helping the woman even in this emergency. The earth kindly opened her mouth as if she could drink in rivers as readily as Satan could open his mouth and pour them forth. Of course these are points in the picture-scene of this vision, and not literal, historic facts. They had significance no doubt—culminating in the general doctrine that God never lacks the means to frustrate the devices of Satan—often, nay, usually, making the very wrath of devils and of men to praise himself. I think it would be quite superfluous for us to ask what special point in Satan’s fight or strategy is denoted by the flood from his mouth, or what special mode of deliverance for his church is foreshadowed by the earth opening her mouth to drink in that flood. When the text gives us no light as to any specific application of a symbol, it is quite wise for us to rest in the general truth taught and give it as wide an application as we find convenient.—The duration here is the same as in v. 6—the conception coming historically from the same Daniel.



CHAPTER XIII.

This chapter introduces two new personages who play a vitally important part in the scenes described throughout chapters 13–19. They are both savage wild beasts;—the first comes up from the sea (v. 1); the second from the land (v. 11); both sustain special relations to the great red dragon already introduced in chap. 12, for they are his servants, subserving his purposes and doing his work.

Here our first main question should be—*Who are these beasts?* What do they represent?—Certainly some great persecuting powers, for they make war with the saints and overcome them (v. 7); they blaspheme God, his tabernacle and his people (v. 6); they receive their power from the red dragon and do his work (vs. 2, 4); they receive the homage of all whose names are not in the Lamb's book of life (v. 8); and in all these points the second beast is only a subordinate agent of the first (v. 12), acting upon the public mind by great but lying miracles and by manifold deceptions to bring to him the confidence and the worship of the people.—The same view is sustained by the obvious allusion to the beasts of Daniel's visions (chaps. 7 and 8) which represent worldly powers hostile to Christ. These are similar powers, reproduced under like symbols.—For the more precise identification of these two beasts we must bear in mind the positive limitations of time within which the main events of this book must fall as given us by the revealing Spirit repeatedly, in both the first chapters of the book and the last. And then finally we are very much indebted to chap. 17 in which the revealing angel appears for the definite and declared purpose of explaining to the prophet and to us what is meant by the woman and by the beast that carries her having seven heads and ten horns. The explanations given in that chapter are God's own key to the sense of this chapter and of these two beasts.—At this stage of the discussion I need only say that, guided by these limitations of time, by these points of character, and by these special explanations, it is simply impossible to make any thing else of the first beast save the Roman Empire—the civil power of the Roman Emperors; while the second beast (v. 11), judging from the description given of him here, from his influence as sketched here, and also from the further description of him which appears in chap. 16: 13, 14, and in 19: 20—"the false prophet that wrought miracles before him" [the first beast] "with which he deceived them that had the mark of the beast," etc., we must interpret to be the *Pagan Priesthood*—everywhere ministering to the idolatrous homage paid to the Roman Emperors; everywhere inspiring the animus of Paganism, and by virtue of their character, naturally active in the persecution of Christians. Beyond all question this second beast is co-ordinate and co-operative with the first and therefore *contemporaneous*, doing its work at the same time; receiving its final doom in the same fearful hour of judgment.—Another great personage is yet to appear, first called "Babylon" (14: 8, and 16: 19), and then taken up for a more particular description and explanation in chap. 17. Her real name, her place in history, and her relation to the first beast will be readily seen when those passages come under consideration.

In this chapter the beast from the sea is described (vs. 1, 2); also the special fate of one of his heads (v. 3); the worship given him (v. 4); additional points of his character and history (vs. 5-

8); a special call of attention to him (v. 9), with an intimation of God's retribution upon such wickedness (v. 10).—The second beast comes to view and is described (vs. 11-17), and the chapter closes with an intimation that special wisdom will be requisite to identify precisely the then present representative of this formidable beast (v. 18).

1. And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

The prophet's standpoint is not in heaven but on earth, the things to be shown being just now, earthly. His position is upon the sand of the sea, *i. e.*, upon the shore, that he may have a view of the first great beast coming up from the sea.—Probably we may take the sea to represent the vast populations of earth considered as agitated by wars and revolutions, surging and tossing in dismal disorder and perpetual unrest—out of which condition of the various countries and kingdoms of the civilized world there came up the *great Roman Empire*.—I hardly need say that this beast is a savage wild beast (Greek, *therion*), not having the remotest analogy to the four "beasts" [living ones] of chap. 4: 6-9.—The seven heads are shown (chap. 17: 9, 10) to represent the seven hills on which the great harlot, borne on the beast, sitteth—but more prominently the seven successive emperors who were in their order and for the time being, the brain-power of the empire, representing her; doing her work.—Of the horns I shall have occasion to speak more definitely when we reach the explanation in chap. 17: 12-17.—In the last clause the better reading gives us the plural, "names of blasphemy," apparently not less than one on each head.

2. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

This beast though from the sea is not a sea but a land monster, grouping its prominent organs from the most active, formidable and terrible wild beasts known to man. To crown all, the dragon has put him in power to do his own persecuting work against the people and the name of God. He is Satan's prime minister and general agent.

3. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

The specially noticeable thing here is that one of the heads received a fatal wound, and yet the beast did not die but rallied

and still lived. Normally the head holds such relations to the entire animal that a deadly wound upon it is fatal to life. Here the head dies but the animal lives because other heads in their succession perform for their time the brain functions of the beast. This comes of having more heads than one. The explanation given us (17: 10) proves that these heads perform their respective functions, not simultaneously but successively, for there "five are fallen, one is, and the seventh is yet to come."

This dynasty of Roman Emperors was founded by Julius Cæsar. It was the uprising of the old elements of liberty that cost him his life. At that moment the death of the empire which he founded seemed probable, not to say inevitable; but to the wonder of mankind the beast rallied under Augustus and lived on. "His deadly wound was healed and all the world wondered after the beast."

4. And they worshiped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshiped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

"And they" ("the world"—the masses of the people) worshiped the dragon *because* [the better reading in place of "which"] he gave power unto the beast, and they worshiped the beast," etc. This is devil-worship and king-worship. Devil-worship has been often practiced among the heathen in the most formal and definite manner possible; yet I am not aware that such was the case in the Rome of the Cæsars. But it should be borne in mind that worshipping the emperor was virtually worshipping the devil, and that he cares little for the form provided he has the reality, well enough satisfied if he can draw men's hearts away from God and draw them into any form of idol-worship.—All the early emperors demanded and received religious worship as gods of the nation. This horrible fact is amply attested in history. Gibbon manifestly disliked to admit and record the fact, but could not excuse himself. "The deification of the emperor is the only instance in which they departed from their accustomed prudence and modesty." "The imperious spirit of the first Cæsar too easily consented to assume during his lifetime a place among the tutelary deities of Rome." [Decline and Fall, chap. 3]—Of Caligula, Taylor says, "Finding no one dare to oppose his sanguinary caprice, he began to regard himself as something more than a mere mortal, and to claim divine honors; and finally he erected a temple to himself and instituted a college of priests to superintend his own worship" [vol. 1, p. 261].—Unlimited and unrestrained power filled them with pride and culminated in this assumption of the honors of real divinity.

5. And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

6. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

No blasphemy can surpass that of arrogating the homage and worship due to God alone. This was practically blaspheming God, his name, his tabernacle, and his worshipers. To receive such worship from men is most emphatically to deify and traduce both God and all his true worshipers in heaven. The offering of such worship to men is practically and outrageously denying supreme homage to God only.—In the last clause of verse 5 the Sinaitic manuscript, instead of “continue,” etc., reads, “And it was given unto him to *do*,” *i. e.*, what he pleased.—Forty-two months, here (as throughout this book) by historical allusion to Daniel indicates an indefinite period of calamity, such as is suggested by the case of the persecuted Jews in the age of the Maccabees. This may perhaps intimate that the persecution under Nero continued about three and a half years; but it seems to me more satisfactory to suppose that this time is named under the influence of the case in Daniel to indicate that this season of persecution was like that. It may have been somewhat more or less than three and a half years.

7. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The sway of these Roman Emperors reached all kindreds and tongues. For a season God gave them a fearful power of persecution against his people. All were drawn into this man-worship save those whose names were in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world. Those whom the Father had thus given to him (John 10: 29) no force of persecution, no edicts of savagely cruel Roman Emperors, could avail to seduce and destroy. This was said to the brethren of the seven churches to show them where their strength lay, in whose hand they had been put for safe-keeping, and on whom therefore they might rely in the sternest emergencies.

9. If any man have an ear, let him hear.

10. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

But let every willing ear be open to hear this: *God will requite a terrible retribution upon all persecutors in due time.* Whoever shall drag others into captivity [or exile] must in due time go

himself; whoever kills God's innocent children with the sword must surely himself perish by the sword. The arrangements of God's providence may put the patience and faith of the saints to a stern trial, even for a period that may seem long; but let them know that God rules and at no distant day will execute justice upon the wicked!

11. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

14. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

This beast is distinguished from the first (v. 1) by coming up from the earth (not necessarily out of the bowels of the earth); by having two horns (not ten) and those not as of a savage wild beast but "of a lamb." Truly he had "stolen the livery of heaven to serve the devil in." How innocent and harmless in appearance; yet "he spake as a dragon." All the cunning and wickedness of Satan were in his words. Only the more dangerous was he for his lamb-like aspect.—"Exercising all the power of the first beast" seems to mean that he works toward the same result—promoting idolatry, king-worship, blasphemy against the true God, and the persecution unto death of his people. Especially he claims to have miraculous power, pretending to call down fire from heaven (like Elijah, 1 Kings 18: 38), and so he deceives the vast populations of the Roman Empire and draws them into such worship of the emperor as belongs to God only. It can not well be doubted that in this description the prophet drew from the practices of the false prophets (*e. g.*, in the days of Jeremiah) whose influence was unutterably pernicious in depraving and debasing the people and paralyzing every effort of the true prophets to turn them back to God. Equally pernicious was the influence of this second beast—the Pagan priesthood. They were precisely the ministers of heathen idolatry and of king-worship, devoting their immense influence to sustain Pagan ideas, Pagan worship and all Pagan abominations.

On the question whether this second beast can be Papal Rome, it should surely suffice to say that every feature of the description

points us to the Pagan priesthood; that this beast worked for the Pagan Emperor as Papal Rome certainly did not in the age of her first seven emperors, six hundred years before Papal Rome became a well-defined system, and one thousand years before she became thoroughly a great persecuting power. Hence it is entirely inadmissible to find Papal Rome in this second beast. As surely as this prophecy makes the first beast and the second contemporaneous and co-working, and as surely as history locates the persecuting activities of the seven heads of Pagan Rome on the one hand and of Papal Rome on the other one thousand years asunder, so surely do the stubborn facts of history rule out as absurd and impossible the theory that this second beast is Papal Rome.

15. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

This power to put vitality, *i. e.*, life, force, into the first beast I take to mean only and precisely that his influence was effective, great, indispensable, in sustaining the system of Paganism, and in infusing the animus, or better, the *virus* of the persecuting spirit against God's people.

16. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

As all God's people received his mark, so all the devil's followers must needs bear his. The ban of public sentiment fell on all who would not receive and wear this mark. They were ostracized from society, driven from the market-place, denied the right to any of the most common privileges of Roman citizens. Not only was the brand of opprobrium put on them, but the mark of Satan's vengeance.

18. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

The emperor then on the throne was for the time the representative of the beast. Obviously he is now before the mind, and moreover is thought of as a persecutor to whom all must yield divine honors, or suffer under his persecuting wrath.—The "number of the beast," defined to be the "number of a man," is generally (and in my view correctly) thought to refer to the numerical power

of the letters which compose his proper name. The Hebrews and the Greeks used each their own alphabet for numerical purposes. In Hebrew the first letter is one; the second, two, etc.; the tenth, ten; but the eleventh is twenty; the nineteenth is one hundred; the twentieth, two hundred, etc. Hence each letter had a numerical power. In our passage the numerical power of the name is given to find the name itself.—A preliminary question will be, whether this name is to be spelled in Hebrew letters with their numerical power, or in Greek letters. It being manifestly the intention of the writer to put his readers in a way to spell out the name, and yet not give it so plainly as to expose himself or his brethren to persecuting vengeance; and inasmuch as his readers (some of them being Jews) would have the advantage of the Roman magistrates in deciphering Hebrew letters, it becomes antecedently probable that he would use them.—Supposing this name to have been written in Hebrew characters with their known numerical power, and taking the name of Nero as it appears often in the Talmud and in other Rabbinical writings,* we shall have as the numerical equivalent of these Hebrew letters in their order, $50 + 200 + 6 + 50$; and $100 + 60 + 200 = 666$. This result must seem quite satisfactory, even though it rested on the mere fact that these seven Hebrew letters by the sum of their numerical powers give us precisely the well-known Hebrew name of Nero. But the proof that sustains the correctness of this solution is greatly strengthened by another remarkable fact. Let it be borne in mind that the received Greek text gives these three Greek letters [$\chi \xi \varsigma$]*—*pronounced *chi, xi, vai*; and having in their order these numerical powers, $600 + 60 + 6 = 666$. Now the fact is brought out and fully discussed by Ireneus, that in his day (A. D. 180) some manuscripts had a different reading for the middle character, viz., not ξ (xi), but ι (iota). He insists however that the true reading is xi (ξ).—Can the other reading be accounted for? It can, most readily. There was a second mode of spelling the name Nero in Hebrew, viz., by writing it, not Nerôn, but Nero, *i. e.*, omitting the final (n). The numerical power of n is fifty. Striking off this final letter reduces the sum total of the “number of his name” from 666 to 616; and to write this amount in three Greek letters we must change the middle one as they stand in our text from (xi) to (iota), *i. e.*, from the letter which means 60 to the letter which means 10. Precisely this is the change which appears in the different reading of which Ireneus speaks. Hence it becomes substantially certain that the “number of the beast” was understood by some at least before the age of Ireneus; certain also that they read in this number the name of Nero Cæsar; certain also that there being a second way of writing his name (*i. e.*, Nero rather than Nerôn), the change was made in the text which this other spelling of the name would require. This double coincidence is

* גרין קסר

of the sort which could not occur by chance and without a foundation in truth, one time in ten thousand. It amounts therefore practically to demonstration.

Let it also be definitely noted that this passage now becomes one of the irrefragable proofs that Nero was the reigning emperor when this book was written; and also that the succession of Roman emperors, of which he was the sixth (17: 10) constitute the seven heads of the beast first shown coming up from the sea (13: 1), which beast therefore represents the regal power of Pagan Rome.

—I have treated this subject with the utmost brevity, omitting all allusion to scores of other opinions, none of which, as compared with the view given above, has any claim upon our particular attention. Stuart's Apocalypse, vol. 2, pp. 452-459, presents other views at length.



CHAPTER XIV.

Comprehensively there are three main subjects in this chapter: the joy of the redeemed in heaven; the judgments of God upon the wicked in this world, and their eternal misery in the world to come. More particularly, we have a second vision of the one hundred and forty-four thousand redeemed from earth and their character (vs. 1-5); the first angel and his proclamation (vs. 6, 7); the proclamation of the second angel (v. 8); of the third (vs. 9-11); the time of suffering for the saints (v. 12), but their blessedness in the near life to come (v. 13); the reaping of the earth by one like a Son of man (vs. 14-16); and the gathering of its vintage (vs. 17-20).

1. And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

The improved reading of this verse gives us, not "a Lamb," but *the* Lamb, which means the same previously seen and spoken of (chap. 5: 6, 8, 12, 13, and 6: 1, 16, and 7: 9, 10, 14, 17, and 12: 11, and 13: 8). Also, in the last clause, not merely "his Father's name," but "having his name and the name of his Father" written in their foreheads. "The mount Zion," which is here seen in vision as located in heaven, transfers the sacred mount of the holy city below to the heavenly city above.—There seems no reason to doubt that the numbers given here (the "one hundred and forty-four thousand") refer to chap. 7; and yet I see no occasion, here as there, to limit this throng to the saved from the ancient Jewish nation. They seem rather to represent *all* the redeemed, at least

all those who have "come up out of great tribulation." They bear on their foreheads the name of their chosen Master, the God and the Savior whom they love and adore.

2. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

3. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

4. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

5. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

In the last clause of v. 2 the improved reading, instead of "And I heard the voice of harpers," gives us—"And the voice which I heard was as that of harpers;" *i. e.*, he speaks of the same voice from heaven before spoken of and goes on to describe it more fully. It was a sound of heavenly song.—Also in v. 5 the Sinaitic and other manuscripts concur in giving *falsehood* [*pseudos*] instead of "*guile*" [*dolos*]; while the Sinaitic and Alexandrine omit "before the throne of God." All the recent editors concur in this omission.—The special points made here are full of interest and of moral value; the grand magnificent chorus like the roar of ocean and "the voice of great thunder;" yet with music of heavenly sweetness as of harpers playing with their harps: also that it is a "new song," unlike the song familiar to heavenly ears in the ages before—new because it celebrates new scenes of victory through grace, new triumphs over Satan and sin—a song which none can learn but the souls redeemed from earth. This does not mean that the sinless angels will not love to hear this song and will not praise God for such grace to their once fallen but now recovered brethren; but does mean that their experiences have no such witness to bear to the praise of grace that redeems souls from sin and death.—In v. 4 the word for virgins is in the masculine gender, showing at least that it does not apply to woman to the exclusion of man. It seems to me probable that lewdness is used here to represent idolatry of heart—the giving of the heart to some idol rather than to God alone—according to the current usage of the Old Testament prophets. If it be taken in its literal sense it must still be considered as applying without distinction of sex, and also as a representative sin, really including all sin.—Characteristically they follow the Lamb wherever he goeth, through scorn, shame, toil, suffering, death—with one only

law of life—implicit obedience to their glorious Leader; the settled, changeless purpose to follow his steps, lead wherever they may.—These were redeemed from among men, from this fallen race, and not gathered into heaven from some sinless realm—some order of beings among whom sin and woe were never known. They are a first fruit unto God and the Lamb, as a closer translation of the original would require.—The preferable reading in v. 5—*lie* instead of “*gnile*”—probably looks to the staunch and unflinching testimony they had borne for God in the face of persecution. Some who had previously professed Christ quailed before the terrible ordeal of torture and death, and prevaricated or denied; but these were true and could not deny Christ.—The reader will not fail to note the moral bearing of all these points upon the hearts of Christians under the fierce temptations incident to an era of fiery persecution. It ought to bear with precious moral power upon all our hearts to-day, girding us to every work and to all patient endurance and self-denial; but it was specially adapted to those days which so fearfully tried men’s souls.

6. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

7. Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

As this angel is the first of a series of three, and designated therefore with no reference to any one before him, he of v. 8 being “another” (*i. e.*, a second) and he of v. 9 being definitely named “the third,” there seems much pertinence in the reading of the Sinaitic manuscript which has, not “another angel,” but simply *an angel*.—Not “fly” but *flying* is the precise translation of the text. Also “*an everlasting gospel*,” not *the*—there being no article and therefore, so far as appears from the text, no allusion to the old and well known gospel, the “glad tidings of great joy to all people.” Yet the main question on this passage is not settled positively by this circumstance of the omission of the article. This main question is whether this gospel is the general one—the news of salvation—or a special one—the tidings that great Babylon is fallen. Inasmuch as *gospel* means *glad tidings*, the word admits either sense.—In favor of the former construction here—the good news of salvation—it may be said (1) That this is the usual sense of the word in the New Testament; (2) It helps us to give a natural and appropriate sense to the word “everlasting”—the glorious old gospel which has been the joy of saints since the first promise in Eden, and is to be their joy till the last redeemed soul is gathered home, and indeed onward thence through

everlasting ages; (3) The announcement of the fall of Babylon is in place (on this construction of the word "gospel") for its bearing upon the great and vital question *whether the gospel of Christ should be preached to all the world*—Babylon having set herself with utmost strength to oppose; God with his high arm of judgment upon her to break her down and give free scope to the outgoing gospel. She stands to frustrate this enterprise: her fall assures its success. These points apply to sustain the first named construction.—On the other hand, in favor of the construction which explains "gospel" here as the glad tidings of Babylon's fall may be urged, (1.) The absence of the article, *i. e.*, the fact that the writer does not say, "having *the* everlasting gospel"—the old well known news of salvation; but simply *everlasting gospel*—everlasting good news that will bear glory to God and good to man through all the future ages.—(2.) It must be admitted that v. 7 gives us the very words which the first angel proclaimed, and there is at least a strong presumption that this is precisely *the good news* which is spoken of in v. 6. That is, the writer first gives in general terms a view of this angel's commission, his message; and then proceeds to give us his very words. Hence the context bears with great force in favor of this second construction.—(3.) It adds much to the force of this consideration that it is altogether in harmony with the genius of this book to have one or more angels sent forward to foreshow the outburst of any great judgment. In harmony with this usage, here is a first angel whose mission is to *herald the fall of Babylon*. That is, he does not come to preach the proper New Testament gospel, the general news of salvation; but the particular and special news that Great Babylon is about to fall. The reader will bear in mind that the seven seals and the seven trumpets were mostly foretokens of the fall of Jerusalem—foreshowings of some of the premonitory indications and progressive advances toward that final and grand result. So of the seven vials of chapter 16.—(4.) There is some objection to the first named theory, and of course some support to the second, in the question—In what sense can an angel be said to have the everlasting gospel of salvation through Christ to preach to all the earth? Especially, how can he preach it by flying through mid heaven? It has pleased God to send, not angels, but men, to preach this gospel in all the world to every creature. What can it mean that this should be done in vision by an angel?—This objection is still heightened when we consider that this is one angel out of three, his work being manifestly in close relation to theirs; while theirs is certainly *not* in any direct sense, the preaching of the gospel of salvation, but the second one announces the fall of Babylon, and the third, the awful woe upon all who belong to this great Babylon.—I incline therefore strongly to this latter construction—the good news that Babylon is about to fail.—Of course this news is good and should call forth ascriptions of glory to God because Babylon appears here as

violently and mightily withstanding the progress of the gospel. Therefore God's hurling her down insures victory to Zion—success over the whole earth to the mission of the gospel and the salvation of the lost. Therefore "fear God and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment has come:" his justice can not sleep forever; and it awakes even now to its work and the cause of God must triumph. Therefore worship him who shows himself the Maker and Lord of all—who, having all the elements of nature in his hand, can wield them all, if need be, for the destruction of his foes.

8. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

The approved reading here omits the word "city," thus: "Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great." The name Babylon appears here first, but doubtless in the same sense as in 16: 19, and 17: 5, and 18: 2, 10, etc. That is, this is "the woman" of 17: 18; "the great harlot" of 17: 1—explained most specifically to be the great city Rome. The Hebrew writers use the symbol of a woman to represent a city. "Jerusalem is the mother of us all" (Gal. 4: 26); Zion sits as a desolate mother in the scenes painted by Jeremiah in his Lamentations (1: 1, 2). Rome was a second Babylon in the threefold sense (1.) of being a great persecutor and oppressor of God's people; (2.) of being thoroughly idolatrous, devoted intensely to idol-worship; (3.) of being doomed like old Babylon to a terrible fall. Here the fall of Babylon is explicitly attributed to her influence in intoxicating and maddening the nations with the hot wine of her spiritual fornication—*i. e.*, her poisoning them all with her idolatry. "The wine of the wrath," etc., is the hot wine, the heating, intoxicating wine which inflamed their passions toward this harlotry of idol-worship.

9. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

10. The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

11. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

These verses paint with fearful imagery the torments of all the worshipers of this "beast"—the same spoken of chap. 13, viz., the Roman imperial power, thought of here as enforcing idol-

worship, and in fact the worship of itself as well as of the countless gods of ancient Rome.—The language, “drink the wine of the wrath of God,” manifestly follows the terms which in v. 8 describe the sin to be punished. Rome had led all the nations to “drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” Retribution comes upon them in the form of “drinking the wine of the wrath of God.” The former expression gives shape to the latter.—This drinking from the cup of God’s indignation has its antecedent type and therefore its explanation in the usage of the Old Testament prophets which may be seen expanded in Jer. 25: 15–29. The idea there is that God leaves such guilty nations to a mad infatuation which brings on their utter ruin. They eat the fruit of their own crimes. It is of course implied that beyond the natural results of sin, the hand of God is against them in righteous retribution. Yet this retribution, in the case of judgments on nations in this world, often, perhaps usually, comes in the way of the natural results of outrageous sinning. The phraseology here points strongly to some direct infliction of suffering in righteous punishment for sin.—The translation, “poured out,” can scarcely be justified from the original text which means precisely—which is *mixed undiluted* in the cup of his indignation.—It should be noticed that these sufferings are declared to be “in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb”—the smoke of their torment forever rising within the view of the holy—a fact which had been already foreshadowed in the closing verses of Isaiah’s prophecy (66: 23, 24). Such a manifestation of God’s righteous retribution has its sublime moral lessons, and it is by no means the purpose of God that they shall be lost upon the moral universe.—“They have no rest day nor night”—no rest in a sense of the justice of their cause: no rest in a feeling that they have done nobly in rebellion against God and all goodness; no rest in the spirit of stubborn reckless hardihood and brave endurance; no rest in the hope of ultimate escape or termination to their woe. Alas! what one possible element in their cup of ruin can ever give them rest! They have madly put themselves in the attitude of eternal antagonism against God: how then can they have rest so long as sin is *sin*, and so long as God is Almighty, and so long as the peace and the glory of his throne demand that he should make the punishment of his madly rebellious and incorrigible enemies *exemplary* before the moral universe?—It is well to note the forceful moral bearing of these scenes upon the suffering or imperiled martyrs for whom primarily the Lord gave and John wrote these visions. Well might they say—Save us from the awful doom of those who worship the beast and receive the mark of his name! Fearful as our lot of suffering may be, it is but short, and all beyond is ineffable peace and glorious rest. But who can bear the doom of the men who madly seek our lives? Let us rather pity than curse them! Let us at least bear our hard lot in patience, for its woes are nothing compared with theirs!

12. Here is the patience of the saints : here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

The best manuscripts omit the second "here" and read—"Here is the patience of the saints who keep the commandments of God," etc. The idea is, Here is scope for patience; or better, giving the word patience its ancient and strict sense: Here is demand for the heroic suffering of the saints. They have before them a fearful endurance of trial and torture; let them brace their nerves for this struggle and breast the terrible storm, their eye of blended faith and hope resting on God alone, for there is glorious reward to come!

13. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.

A special voice from heaven proclaims, "Write, Blessed are the dead, etc." This command at this precise point may have had a twofold purpose—(a) to place the reward of the righteous dead in strong contrast with the eternal unrest and untold woe of the wicked dead; and (b) to minister to the Christian fortitude of those who were then subjected to a fearful ordeal of trial, terror, and torture.—"Blessed are the dead"—yet not *all* the dead, but those only who die *in the Lord*—in the special relation which is thus most comprehensively put—dying *for* him, dying in peace and union of soul with him, in humble trust and repose in his grace and love.—"From henceforth" has been taken by some to mean specially that they are blessed immediately after death, with no intervening period of unconsciousness—much less any intervening state of purgatory: and by others to mean that whatever may have been true in former ages, the Christian martyrs of this age and onward will find perfect blessedness in death. It seems to me to have special reference to the scenes of persecution then present and impending, and to say in view of those scenes, not only that the martyred dead were blessed, but that from this point onward their lot would be rather enviable than otherwise—not to be feared but rather to be chosen, so glorious would be their reward and so surely would they escape all the further toils and persecutions of this life. Of course it affirms the great gospel truth of the immediate blessedness of those who die in the Lord, for all such rest from all the toils and trials which press upon them in this earthly state; all such hasten to their ineffably glorious reward.—Their works follow closely after them, to determine the question of their destiny and to receive their appropriate reward.—This must not be pressed to mean that their heavenly blessedness is simply the reward of work and not of grace; but that their works are the witness of their fidelity to Christ and place them within the pale of his friends whom he graciously rewards immeasurably beyond

the line of their simply just deserts. So great is his love to those who have sought to be true and faithful to his name!

14. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

15. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

16. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

One like a Son of man (not "*the* Son") corresponds in this point to the description in Rev. I: 13. That he should appear upon a cloud is peculiar to the glorious Son of man, as in Acts I: 9, and Rev. I: 7, and Mat. 24: 30, and 26: 64, and Dan. 7: 12. I see no objection to supposing that this represents Jesus himself appearing in vision as about to reap the great ripe harvests of the earth. The figure imitates Joel 3: 13. "Put ye in the sickle for the harvest is ripe;" as vs. 17-19 imitate the remaining part of this verse: "for the press is full; the vats overflow."—The golden crown upon his head defines him to be the glorious King and Conqueror. See 19: 12.—Remarkably the word rendered "thrust" applied to the sickle has the primary sense, *to hurl*; to send down as if it were a missile weapon to do its execution by being thrown from the hand. The meaning may be only—send down thy hand which holds the sickle.—The guilty nations of the earth are here the ripe harvests reaped by the sickle of the Righteous and Almighty King—for just retribution.

17. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

19. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great wine-press of the wrath of God.

This scene corresponds mainly with the preceding, differing in the following respects: that there, the sickle is in the hand of the glorious Son of man; here, in the hand of an angel: there, we have in symbol the grain-harvest, and here the vintage: there, the reaping closes the scene; here, the vintage is thrown into the great wine-press of the wrath of God and trodden out—imitating in this

point the scene given in Isa. 63: 7. In each case an angel comes forth, the first from the temple, the second from the altar, to give each harvester his special commission, showing that every thing is done at the immediate behest of the Great Lord of all.

20. And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs.

The treading of this vintage brings out blood, human blood—and in quantities fearfully vast—unto the horses' bridles, for the distance of sixteen hundred furlongs—two hundred miles! A most appalling scene! It has been often said that this is proximately the length of Italy, the peninsula of which Rome is the great central city. If this be not the reason for this specific limitation, I know not what reason can be assigned. It must signify an immense destruction of human life, although this language, since it represents simply what was seen in vision, need not be pressed to signify a precisely literal ocean of blood two hundred miles long.—It is entirely obvious that these two scenes, the grain-harvest (vs. 14–16), and the vintage (vs. 17–20), are a twofold representation of the same grand, fearful destruction of God's enemies. As the power of the Pagan Rome of that age was world-wide—"a great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (17: 18)—it seems natural, not to say inevitable, to apply these twofold descriptions to her predicted fall. It is but expanding in new form the announcement given by the second angel (v. 8). "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!" And with her shall fall also the nations which drank at her hand the hot wine of the maddening cup of her bewitching idolatry. The historians who have written of the decline and fall of the old Roman empire have unconsciously written the fulfillment of these wonderful prophecies. The same subject which in divine prophecy justified these varied, sublime and portentous symbols, became a fit theme for human history, scarcely ever surpassed in its grandeur of eloquence and in its lessons of moral instruction.



CHAPTER XV.

As the seven seals (chaps. 6, and 8: 1), and the seven trumpets (chaps. 8–11) which were developed out of the seventh seal, all precede and prelude the fall of Jerusalem, so the seven angels with vials, portending the seven last plagues, precede and foretoken the fall of old Rome. In the opening of this chapter they appear a

new marvel in heaven; but the detailed report of their mission is delayed a while to show the joy and the songs of heaven in quick anticipation of the triumph to the kingdom of Christ which the judgments they foretold were intended to secure. Hence we have in this chapter the vision of the seven angels with the seven last plagues (v. 1); the glassy sea and the victorious ones with harps of God (v. 2); their song (vs. 3, 4); the opening of the temple in heaven and the seven angels coming forth from it (vs. 5, 6); one of the four living ones gives them their golden vials (v. 7); whereupon the temple is filled with smoke, indicating the glorious presence of Jehovah (v. 8).

1. And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

I see no reason to doubt that these seven angels with the seven vials, whose mission and its results fill up chap. 16, bear the same relation to the fall of Pagan Rome that the seven seals and the seven trumpets bore to the fall of Judaism and of its representative city in the former part of this book. As the development of those foreordained judgments was suspended there (chap. 7), to show us the anticipative joy of the righteous, so here we have the song of those who have gained the victory over the beast. The seven angels are simply introduced to the seer; and then the narration of their work is suspended to give us at this point the song of the victors.—These plagues are called the "last" with reference to the fall of Rome—the last she will need, for they will be final. Possibly this thought may be embraced—the last which this book will have occasion to present in detail. In these is filled up the wrath of God; these will complete the judgments which the justice of God demands upon the great persecuting powers then extant.

2. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

This glassy sea appeared as if the glass were mingled with fire, brilliant and flashing perhaps; most radiant and splendid. The terms doubtless describe the appearance—not the material itself.—Upon or by it are those who had triumphantly withstood all the assaults of the beast upon their piety and integrity—who had come off conqueror in the fierce struggle and temptation which befell the Christian men and women of those times.—The approved text omits "over his mark," and also the article "the" before "harps of God," making it, "having harps of God."—It is not entirely clear whether this sea of glass is a tacit allusion to

Israel standing on the hither shore of the Red Sea when they sung that famous song of Moses (Ex. 15), or whether it is part of the symbolic imagery of heaven itself—the basis of the great central throne, upon which the redeemed are seen standing and singing this song of triumph.

3. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.

4. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou* only *art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

This is doubtless called the song of Moses with allusion to that which was sung on the shore of the Red Sea in triumph over the fallen hosts of Pharaoh, then strewing the shore with their ghastly dead. This allusion suggests the spirit and perhaps the manner of this song, while the allusion to the Lamb seems rather to give us the occasion and source of their triumph, signifying that they have gained this victory through the blood of the Lamb and the gracious strength that comes from a risen ascended Redeemer. In manner like the sons and daughters of Israel on that joyous shore, but in matter as souls redeemed unto God by the blood of the Lamb—so they stand on or by that sea of glass to sing this triumphant song, which it will be seen celebrates not so much their own victory as *God's manifested glory* in his righteous judgment on his foes.

5. And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

6. And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

“The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony” is here the heavenly one in symbolic imitation of the earthly, corresponding therefore both to the earlier tabernacle and to the later temple. It is “the tabernacle of testimony” as containing the ark of the covenant—the witness or testimony of God's covenant with his people. The idea seems to be that the holy of holies is opened, and the ark of testimony therefore brought to view—the whole scene signifying that in these judgments on great Babylon God appears as the covenant-keeping God of his people.—The seven angels come forth from this very temple having the seven vials full of the seven symbolic plagues. They are clad in linen, pure and shining or resplendent, for the original word does not signify “white,” but *shining*.

7. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth forever and ever.

8. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

As the four living ones show their sympathy and interest by calling the seer's attention as each of the first four of the seals is broken (chap. 6: 1-7), so here one of them fulfills the office of presenting to the seven angels these seven golden vials, symbolically full of the wrath of God—*i. e.*, of that which represented the judgments to be poured forth on the doomed, idolatrous and persecuting power.—The "temple filled with smoke" revealed the special presence of God as "a consuming fire" upon his guilty foes (Heb. 12: 29), with tacit allusion perhaps to that well-known symbol of his presence by fire as when he came down to take his abode in the new temple according to 2 Chron. 5: 13, 14, and 7: 1-3: "Then the house was filled with a cloud so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." "When Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifice, and the glory of the Lord filled the house; and the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house."—So here, no man was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues had gone forth and fulfilled their mission. No interceding priest, no prayer in plea, protest or abatement of these plagues could be heard. The divine decree of doom is irrevocable. Eternal justice demands these judgments; no power in heaven or earth can stay them.



CHAPTER XVI.

This chapter discloses the sevenfold series of judgments that came on Great Babylon, culminating in the seventh with the grand consummation of her doom. This series of vials bears a striking resemblance to the seven seals and also yet more to the seven trumpets which are substantially an expansion of the seventh seal. By successive visitations of judgment, blow after blow, upon the earth (v. 2); the sea (v. 3); rivers and fountains (vs. 4-7); the sun (vs. 8, 9); the throne of the beast (vs. 10, 11); the great

Euphrates (vs. 12-16); and last, into the air (vs. 17-21)—the progress of devastation is indicated and the mind receives a deeper impression by the fuller expansion of the subject and the presentation of its special details; or rather by a succession of pictures, scene after scene of desolation, you come to feel that woes are gathered up from all the magazines of God's providential judgments—all the ministries of wasting, plague and death—till the climax of horrors is reached at last in hail of a talent's weight, crashing down upon defenseless cities and their helpless populations.—To some extent we may trace resemblances here to the successive plagues on Egypt, yet here the scenes are not historic but ideal—a species of picture-painting—things shown to the seer of Patmos for the purpose of making on his mind and on the minds of his readers the impression of successive judgments, diversified, vast in their range and scope, fearful in their character, terribly desolating in their final result. I can not repress the conviction that those interpreters who dissociate these successive vials, who assume that they occur entirely and far apart from each other, one falling upon this nation in some given age of the world, another upon that, far remote in place and time, and so on through the entire seven, have greatly mistaken the whole drift of this vision. As the seven seals, so these seven vials, are parts of one grand whole. They fall, not upon many entirely distinct nationalities, but upon some one great central power, and upon others only as related to the controlling force at the center. As to *time* it is in my view quite clear that in the case of the vials, as in the case of the seals and trumpets, they stand not far remote from each other but in close proximity, so that the discrimination of the successive dates of their historic fulfillment is a matter of the least possible account. The series is designed to group together the providential blows that fell on Pagan Rome, the judgments which came in successive storm-blasts upon her, till, shaken to her deep foundations, at last she fell, and Imperial Rome was powerless!

1. And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

Precisely rendered, the best manuscripts read—"Go, pour out the seven vials," etc. The great voice of command came forth *from the temple* where, according to Hebrew ideas, God was supposed to dwell to hear the prayers of his people. It was in answer to their prayer that these judgments came on their cruel oppressors. See chap. 6: 9-11.

2. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshiped his image.

The vials follow the course of the trumpets in this, that the first plague causes suffering but does not take life. See especially the first, second, fourth and fifth trumpets.—This sore [ulcer], torturing and terrible, reminds us of the “boils and blains” of Egypt, and may be considered as an imitation of that plague. (Ex. 9: 9-11).—These judgments fell with exact discrimination, only upon those who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. So most of the plagues of Egypt discriminated in favor of Israel, smiting the Egyptians only.—Several of the most ancient manuscripts (Sinaitic and Alexandrine) render it probable that the true reading should be, not “upon” but *into* the earth, taking effect terribly.

3. And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

The sea became not merely *as* blood—something resembling blood; but *became blood*, resembling that of a dying man, *i. e.*, of one mortally wounded; real blood and in abundance, as when the life-slucices are opened. Of course in such an ocean no creature could live; no form of animal life could survive. Hence this symbol denotes destructive agencies. But it were vain to look for a literal fulfillment of this. Nor would it be in place to look for an era remarkable for marine disasters, or for a pestilence among the myriad populations of the great deep. Such interpretations lose sight of the purposed application of these symbols.

4. And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

5. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

6. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

Here too we readily trace the analogy with the plagues on Egypt.—The angel of the waters is he who presides over the waters, it being assumed that God employs angelic agencies for whatever supernatural effects he may desire upon the elements in the material world. It was therefore solemnly significant and impressive that this angel should recognize the justice of God in this plague.—The most approved reading of v. 5 omits “O Lord,” and in place of “and shalt be,” has *the holy One*, thus: “Righteous art thou who art and who wast, the Holy One, because thou hast judged thus.” The last clause means, not, hast decreed or determined thus; but *hast inflicted such judgments*.—V. 6 sets forth the judgment after the type of the sin, to make it a vivid reminder

to the sufferers of what they had done—thus, Because the blood of saints and prophets they have poured forth, therefore blood dost thou give them to drink! Worthy are they!—Their rivers and their fountains of water turned to blood would remind them of the rivers of blood they had made to flow from the ghastly wounds of slain prophets and saints of God.

7. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* thy judgments.

It is remarkable that the Sinaitic and Alexandrine manuscripts omit "another out of," and read simply and most briefly—"I heard the altar say"—as if the altar were itself personified, sympathizing with the suffering and praying martyrs who lay at its feet—(*under* the altar, is the phrase in chap. 6: 9-11). The altar utters the convictions of the holy in heaven, witnessing that God's ways in judgment on guilty Rome are true to his promise of protection and deliverance to his people—righteous in their relations to the eternal justice of his throne.

8. And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

9. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

This plague causes suffering but not immediate death. This vial poured upon the sun intensified its heat to scorching power upon these wicked men, almost roasting them alive.—In the last clause of v. 8, the more exact rendering is, not "power was given," but "it was given to it [the sun], or possibly to *him* [the angel] to scorch men with fire." The original will bear either construction equally well. But the meaning is that the heat of the sun was so increased that it scorched men, etc.—Note the result upon these hardened sinners. They did not repent but only blasphemed God the more. This is according to the nature of sinning moral agents. When sin has thoroughly gained the ascendancy in the heart and the moral being gives himself up to sin, thenceforward rebellion becomes a madness and a desperation, showing how baseless is the hope and how contrary to the laws of a sinning moral nature is the expectation that the pains of hell will bring sinners to repentance. It is a moral impossibility. In the present world it is far more often the case that love melts than that fear subdues. But when even love loses its power and is only despised, what remains for the desperate rebel but the visitations of judgment, the madness and the woes of the lost!—It is remarkable that these predictions of the moral effects of God's visitations of pain on the guilty in this world should throw so

much light on the nature of sin and the moral effect of suffering in the prison-house of the world to come.

10. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

11. And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

This plague also seems to have had for its function, torture, not death.—Upon the seat—*i. e.*, throne of the beast, indicating that these judgments fell on Imperial Rome. The references to “the great city,” and to “great Babylon” (v. 19) prove that all these terms—“the beast;” “the great city;” “great Babylon”—are used interchangeably or nearly so, with only this distinction, that the beast and his horns look more directly to the imperial power, and the other terms—“city” and “Babylon,” to the very city where that imperial power had its seat and center.—“Full of darkness,” literally, was darkened, deeply shaded and overcast with gloom; oppressed with grievous calamity. As usual, darkness indicates great calamity, the dying out of hope, the pressure of terrible ills.—Here, too, as under the fourth vial, men suffer fearfully, but repent not. So far from repenting, they only blaspheme God the more desperately, with mad rage and the very spirit of Satanic rebellion.

12. And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

This sixth vial has a somewhat striking analogy to the sixth trumpet (9: 14): “Loose the four angels who are bound in the great river Euphrates.” The drying of the Euphrates may be in historic allusion to the drying of the Red Sea under the rod of Moses, to which Isaiah also alludes (Isa. 11: 15, 16), and not improbably to the drying of this very river-bed by Cyrus to prepare the way for the capture of Babylon. We have the fact of drying the bed of a great water in both cases; the very locality is given in the case of Cyrus. The underlying principle appears in both cases—God’s supreme, providential agency, equal to any desired result of judgment and ruin on his enemies.—As to the historic facts predicted, it is well known that the Parthians from the great East beyond the Euphrates were in the age of John the only great power capable of measuring arms with Imperial Rome. Under the shock of their numbers and of their energy, Rome began to lose her prestige of victory and her long acknowledged superiority in arms; and soon the hordes from Northern Europe and Asia broke in upon her as if indeed the way of their kings had been prepared of God for the desolation of that great, idolatrous and persecuting city.

13. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

14. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto the kings of the earth and the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

It results from the nature of these symbolic visions that spirits become visible. The three unclean (*i. e.*, loathsome, wicked, satanic) spirits take on the appearance of frogs—being held up by this symbol to our disgust, abhorrence, execration. They come forth out of the mouth of the great red dragon of chap. 12: 3; and out of the mouth of the beast of chap. 13: 1, 2; and out of the mouth of the false prophet of chap. 13: 11–15. But very noticeably the term “beast” in this last case is dropped and we have an explanatory term in its stead, *i. e.*, the symbol shades off into or toward the reality. For I see not how we can for a moment doubt that the second beast (of chap. 13: 11–15) is precisely the same as the false prophet here and in 19: 20 and 20: 10. The descriptions given of his functions in chap. 13: 13, 14, and in 19: 20 suffice to decide this point with certainty. The first description is—“he doeth great wonders; maketh fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men; deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by his miracles,” etc.—all in the interest of the first beast. In the latter passage (19: 20) “the beast was taken and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast,” etc. The “false prophet” therefore is only another name for the beast which came out of the earth, “having two horns like a lamb, and who spake as a dragon.”—All these three unclean spirits are further described—“spirits of devils working miracles,” and their special mission as shown here is “to go forth and muster all the kings of the world to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.” This is done by alluring them into the idolatries of old Rome and into her persecuting work against the saints of God. This of course would put them into antagonism against Almighty God and array them for that final battle which the visions of this prophecy portend.

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

“Come as a thief,” but only in the respect here indicated, *i. e.*, not to steal—not to violate a precept of the moral law; but to come *suddenly*, with no immediate and special forewarning. The symbol contemplates the taking away of another’s clothing surreptitiously, leaving him when he awoke with no garments to hide

his shame. But of course such symbols must be construed within the limitations which the nature of the case demands.—The solemn admonition is, Watch; for else the coming of the Almighty in his judgments will find thee sleeping and leave thee naked and undone!

16. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

Not "he"—any one individual—but they [the three unclean spirits] gathered them [the kings of the earth, v. 14] together. The place Armageddon (equal to Mount of Megiddo) takes its name by historic allusion from Megiddo, a place famed for battle and slaughter, where a host of Canaanites fell before Deborah and Barak (Judges 5: 19); and where the good Josiah was mortally wounded in battle with Pharaoh-nechoh (2 Kings 23: 29 and 2 Chron. 35: 20-25)—a scene which became the more memorable because of the great mourning over the fall of Josiah to which Zechariah alludes (12: 11). The significance here is essentially—a place of immense slaughter. There the Almighty meets them for terrible retribution!

17. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

These awful inflictions reach their crisis and consummation under the seventh vial. It is poured into the air, perhaps as being the supposed abode of the spirits from the pit, Satan being "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2: 2); or may it not be because, poured out upon the air, it was naturally diffused over all the realm of the beast, taking effect every-where?—The "great voice from the temple"—the recognized abode of the Great God who hears prayer—witnesses to the connection between the prayers of suffering martyrs and this crushing infliction upon the great persecuting power of the early Christian age. The proclamation made was tersely and terribly expressive—*done, done!* Imperial Rome goes down and is no more! So much was shown and said in this heavenly vision.

18. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, *and* so great.

The old manuscripts exhibit some diversity in the order of the three words—"voices;" thunders; lightnings; with the best authorities for this: "lightning and voices and thunder." This diversity may be due to some doubt whether there were any articulate voices other than the echoes of the thunder, the two last words in the preferred order expressing but one idea—"and voices

of the awful thunder."—The earthquake was Nature's witness to the footsteps of God, coming in his fearful retributions! The same symbol was the last antecedent forewarning of the first dread catastrophe (11: 13). What could be more significant, what more terrific! as if the solid earth were trembling and giving way because it could not endure the face of the Almighty in the great day of his wrath!

19. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

This great Babylon is the same whose fall was proclaimed by the second angel (14: 8); the same which is represented by the "great harlot" and the "woman" (17: 1-6, 18), and whose fall is the theme of chap. 18.—Her sins of idolatry and cruel oppression and persecution of the saints come up before God, remembered for retribution, and now the time has come for her to drink the wine-cup of his indignation. The great city seen in vision as "divided into three parts" probably indicates in general that it was utterly demolished, its imperial power broken down and brought to nought.—The phrase, "the cities of the nations," the Sinaitic manuscript gives, "the city," in the singular, apparently taking it as another designation of Rome herself, the queen city of the nations. But the mass of authorities are for the plural, which must be understood to refer to the powers represented by the ten horns of chap. 17: 12-17: in other words, the outlying provinces and kingdoms that were long tributary to Rome; that sinned with her; to some extent turned against her in the era of her decline, but finally suffered a similar doom of righteous retribution.

20. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

The scene is fearful and the language vividly descriptive. Every island fled; not a mountain could be found—literally, "mountains were not found." How can even the great rock formations of our globe that underlie the islands and make the huge mountains, endure the dreadful presence of the Almighty in the day of his avenging retributions upon the "mother of harlots and abominations of the earth!" (17: 5.)

21. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

The Attic talent is estimated at fifty-seven pounds troy and the Jewish at one hundred and fourteen. Hail-stones of such weight

fall like bomb-shot or cannon balls. The vial poured into the air is bringing forth its fruit in this terrific storm!—Again we are told that men repent not under this last and most fearful infliction, but only blaspheme God the more.—The historic fulfillment of this catalogue of woes will be more appropriately presented at the close of the yet more detailed description in chap. 18.



CHAPTER XVII.

A strange looking beast, having seven heads and ten horns, has been already shown in vision, and some things have been said by way of explaining who he is and what he does (13: 1-6); then a great city called "Babylon the great" has been doomed to a fearful and utter fall (14: 8-11, and 16: 19); the seven angels having the seven vials, indicative of successive judgments from the Almighty, have gone forth and poured out their vials (16: 1-21); but yet so far the explanations given of these symbols have been few and imperfect. More explanation was needed; one of those seven angels comes forward here to give it. This chapter is throughout an explanation of symbols previously shown or at least indicated; viz., the great harlot; the scarlet-colored beast and his seven heads and ten horns. The angel distinctly declares that he comes to John to give explanations: "I will *show* thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters" (v. 1); "I will tell thee the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carrieth her which hath the seven heads and ten horns" (v. 7);—In a series of visions so thoroughly symbolic, where literal statements occur so rarely, where the landmarks of interpretation are so few, it should call forth our deepest gratitude that God has kindly given us here one whole chapter of *actual explanation*. It will be noted with joy that these explanations treat of the most important symbols which appear in the second principal portion of the book (chaps. 13-19).—Here we have the great harlot defined (vs. 1-6); the explanation of the beast of seven heads and ten horns, the heads being first explained (vs. 7-11); and next the ten horns and their relations and deeds (vs. 12-14, and 16, 17); while the waters upon which the woman sat are explained (v. 15), and she herself is comprehensively indicated (v. 18).

1. And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters;

One of the highest angels of the heavenly hierarchy comes with inimitable kindness to show the seer of Patmos what the otherwise dark symbols, brought before his prophetic eye, really meant. Daniel was favored in the same way, as may be seen (7: 16, 23, and 8: 15-19, and 9: 20-23, and 10: 5-21). John was favored with similar explanations of other scenes (21: 9).—It should be noticed that the angel here proposes to show not merely who this great harlot is, but what judgment the Almighty was about to bring upon her—"will show thee the *judgment* of the great harlot," etc. This is mainly done in the latter part of the chapter (vs. 16, 17).—That she "sits upon many waters" is explained (v. 15) to mean that she is the queen city of the nations—the great metropolis of the provinces and lesser kingdoms of the civilized world. She sits upon these waters in royal state, as is said of the other Babylon, her type (Isa. 47: 7), "I sit a queen," etc. Of course this city can be no other than Pagan Rome.

2. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

"Fornication" in the sense of the Old Testament prophets is idolatry. This great harlot (Rome) had been intensely idolatrous; had wrought her religion into the very frame-work of her civil institutions and her fundamental law. In the period of her history here contemplated, this abomination became even more open and outrageous than ever before, by the deification of her emperors and the demand set up that they should be worshiped as gods. In this fornication all the tributary kings of subject nations were involved. They were made drunk with the hot wine of her spiritual fornication.

An objection made at this point to the application of these words—"harlot," "abomination," etc.—to Pagan Rome, should be carefully examined. It is claimed that this woman can not be Rome Pagan, and must be Rome Papal, because these terms are used in the Old Testament only of Israel, and of her only in view of her covenant [marriage] relation to God; and therefore, when brought forward into the Christian age must describe an *apostate church*, and not a merely heathen people and their idolatrous worship.—Is this objection valid? Does Old Testament usage forbid the application of these terms to Rome Pagan, and require us to apply them to Rome Papal?

In reply I make the following points:

1. It seems to me entirely sufficient to answer that these terms having passed into current use to denote idolatry and its associate practices (*e. g.*, lewdness, necromancy, the worship of devils, the offering of human sacrifices, etc.), might be applied in this book to Pagan Rome and her idolatries, on the simple principle of using the language, the figures, and the symbols of the Old Testament prophets in the same general sense in which they are found there.

2. There is no reason a priori for assuming that the guilt and the odium couched under these terms depended so much upon the previous covenant relation to God of the parties to whom they are applied as to make them inapplicable to Pagan Rome. In this book of the New Testament, idolatry might be called adultery and abomination, even in a heathen people, never in special covenant with God, the terms being transferred naturally from the Old Testament in this sense.

3. The guilt and odium of idolatry and of its associate practices are the same in nature (though less in degree) in a Pagan people as in an apostate church.

4. The reason why these terms are usually applied to the Jews in the Old Testament is obviously that the prophets were sent to them rather than to the outlying heathen. God had unlimited occasion to reprove them for their idolatries, but did not make it his special object to try to rebuke and reform the heathen of that age.

5. But should these considerations seem insufficient to obviate the objection now in hand, it remains to say that Old Testament usage amply sustains the application of these terms to the heathen, who were never in special covenant with God.—As to the term “whoredom,” note what was said of Jezebel, a Zidonian princess: “What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?” (2 Kings 9: 22.) Or what is said of the Babylonians (Ezek. 23: 17): “The Babylonians defiled her with their *whoredoms*.” Or what is said of Nineveh in a very striking passage (Nahum 3: 4), which seems to have given shape to these expressions in the Apocalypse: “Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredom and families through her witchcraft.”—As to the kindred term, “abomination,” wrought here into the very forehead name of this mystic Babylon (v. 5), “The mother of harlots and *abominations* of the earth,” Old Testament usage appropriates this word more thoroughly than any other to express precisely the idolatries and associate practices of real heathenism. The Mosaic law has it (Deut. 18: 9): “Thou shalt not learn to do after the *abominations* of those nations;” and (Deut. 20: 18) “Thou shalt utterly destroy those nations of Canaan that they teach you not to do after all their *abominations* which they have done unto their gods.” The word became a name for the central and chief idol, and we read of “Mileom, the abomination of the Ammonites” (1 Kings 11: 5); of “Chemosh, the abomination of Moab” (v. 7); of “Ashtoreth, the abomination of the Zidonians” (2 Kings 23: 13). See also 1 Kings 14: 24, and 2 Kings 16: 3, and 21: 2, and 2 Chron. 36: 14.—And finally it is squarely in point that Jesus himself, speaking of the Roman legions and their idolatrous standards approaching Jerusalem, as the signal to his people for flight from Jerusalem, says (Mat. 24: 15, and Mk. 13: 14), “When ye shall see the *abomination* that maketh desolate,” etc., “then flee to the

mountains." Of this word "abomination" in this passage, Dr. Alexander says, "It is specially applied to every thing connected with idolatry and heathenism."—With these words of his Lord not improbably familiar and perhaps present to his mind, John might very naturally speak of the same Rome at the same age as the *mother of abominations*.—I must therefore conclude that the objection raised against the reference of these terms to Pagan Rome is without adequate foundation.

3. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

"In the spirit" should rather be "*in spirit*," without the article, here as in the other passages of this book (1: 10, and 4: 2, and 21: 10).—So we should read, "into a wilderness," not "*the wilderness*," as if it referred to some one previously named. A wilderness was chosen apparently as a fit place for presenting such scenes as were here to be shown.—It is the beast, not the woman, who is covered over with names of blasphemy.—Was this beast the same which was shown the prophet and described in chap. 13: 1-8? His color is not given there, but his heads and horns are there as here, seven and ten respectively; and his names of blasphemy are made equally prominent in both descriptions; there, "upon his head the names of blasphemy;" "a mouth speaking blasphemies," etc.; here, he is full, *i. e.*, covered over, with "names of blasphemy." There can be no doubt therefore of their true identity. There, all the points made conspire to prove this seven-headed, ten-horned beast to be Pagan Rome, contemplated as a civil government, an empire; and the same is no less true here. The woman, *i. e.*, the city, Rome, reposes upon this beast. The empire built up Rome to become the mistress of the world. She sat in queenly dignity upon this world-wide reigning power. The Empire made the city of Rome great.

4. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

The woman was most gorgeously arrayed.—As to the facility of finding an easy and natural fulfillment in the Rome of John's time, it matters little whether we interpret this description literally of her luxury and splendor, or symbolically of her harlot-life, *i. e.*, of her enormous power toward idolatry and its abominable practices. The latter part of the verse looks most obviously to the latter idea. "The golden cup in her hand full of abominations," etc., was that with which she seduced the nations into her national

sins, poisoning the minds of the great men of the earth and firing their passions toward her idolatrous corruptions. As to luxury, the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii, buried in that very age and disinterred within our own, reveal no two facts more striking than these—that the style of common life was gorgeously splendid, and that society must have been inexpressibly rotten with lasciviousness—the fruit no doubt in large part of the debasing influence of idol-worship and its associate abominations.

5. And upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

It is fully in harmony with the manner of this book that its prominent personages should wear their own names on their foreheads, or elsewhere on the person.—On this verse, critics make two questions—(1.) How many of these words belong to the name and were written upon her forehead, and how much of the verse (if any) is the angel's explanation of her name?—(2.) What does the name mean and to whom does it belong?—Some editions of the English Bible put all the words after "written," in large capitals, assuming that they all belong to her inscribed name. The original gives us no such help toward the views of the writer. Yet it seems to me by no means improbable that the English version has given it truly. The word "mystery" suggests that the name is mystic, symbolic;—has an occult meaning. Prof. Stuart thinks that the name really written on her forehead was only "*Babylon the Great*," and objects against including in the name the words that follow, urging that this woman would not call herself "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth."—Very true, neither did she call herself "Babylon the Great." The prophet is not giving us the name which Rome gave to herself, but the mystic name under which this woman was shown to him by the angel. All these words have their appropriate place and fulfill their appropriate functions upon her forehead when viewed in this, their true light.—As to the meaning little more need be said. The name proves this woman to be the very "Babylon the Great" whose fall is announced in 14: 8, and 16: 19, and throughout chap. 18.—Her harlotry and abomination need no further explanation.

6. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

7. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

She was seen drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs. Nero instigated a most bloody persecution; Domitian followed, and several other emperors.—In the phrase, “with great admiration,” I judge that “admiration” in its modern sense is not quite the word. Admiring implies something akin to approving, and by no means expresses the amazement and probably even *horror* which this spectacle—a woman drunk with blood—the blood of innocent men and women—had produced in his mind. Ah, he must have thought—“and does this indicate the sufferings yet to be borne by the people of my God—the blood yet to be shed of saints and martyrs, my own brethren?” And very probably his inquiring mind was still asking—Who is this woman? What persecuting power does she represent?—To this supposed attitude of his mind the angel really replies in the verses that follow. He kindly proposes to identify the woman and the beast upon which she sat, and his seven heads and ten horns.

8. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

One of the first and most vital questions bearing upon the interpretation of this verse, and indeed of vs. 10, 11 as well, is this:—What is the real *present* of these verbs—the “*is not*” as compared with the “*was*,” etc.? Does the angel go back to chap. 13 to take up for further explanation what is said there of the one head mortally wounded, but from which wound the beast rallied again and all the world wondered; and was the temporary suspension of beast-life and power at that moment precisely the “*is not*” of this passage: or on the other hand, in these verses (8, 10, 11) is the ideal present the point after five had fallen, *i. e.*, the precise present moment of the vision and of this explanation?—This question is not without its difficulties, yet I on the whole conclude that in v. 8 and v. 11, the revealing angel falls back to the scenes and the present time of chap. 13; while in v. 10 he is not describing the scenes of chap. 13, but rather is giving exactly the then present status of the heads (alias kings) of the beast, so that in this one verse (*viz.* 10) the present is the time of this vision and of its explanation. I am driven to this conclusion by the manifest indications in v. 8 of allusions to the scenes of chap. 13: 1-8, 12, 14. “The beast that thou sawest” (*i. e.*, as described 13: 1-8) and over which “all that dwell on the earth”—not written in the book of life—wondered so greatly, the reader will notice identifies itself perfectly with the points made in chap. 13—“All the world wondered after the beast” (v. 3); “all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him whose names are not written in the book of life,” etc. (v. 8). Those wonderful things—the beast mortally

wounded in one of his heads, yet living again with more vigorous life than before; the great wonder excited by this circumstance and the world-wide homage given him;—these points are brought up from chap. 13 for further explanation and also to identify the beast of which he is to speak.—Hence this beast is the Roman imperial power, the dynasty of the Cæsars which began with Julius; which seemed to be smitten down when the sword felled him to the earth; which therefore had its brief period of *not being* (“*is not*”) but which, to the astonishment of the world, revived again with more consolidated strength than ever before. The angel considering his present time to be that eventful moment said of the beast, “ascendeth,” or more precisely, “shall soon ascend” [is just about to ascend] out of the bottomless pit;—for the angel assumed that at death he went down there; but on his resuscitation came up again. “But he shall go into perdition,” for this wonderful coming to life does not insure his immortality. He is destined to be hurled back in due time to his own place. Thus the angel predicts the fall of this Roman Power.—The improved reading of the very last word of this v. 8 [parestai] has the sense—“and is near”—*i. e.*, though for the moment you may say of him, “he is not,” yet he was near and would soon be in life and power again.

9. And here *is* the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth.

Here is scope for study, for deep, searching, discriminating thought. No one can hope to understand these matters without labor.—It is remarkable that in chap. 13 we have at this precise point a very similar suggestion: “If any man have an ear, let him hear” (13: 9). These are matters of vital interest, but you must needs bend your ear intently if you would hear—give your mind to deep thought if you would understand.—The seven heads have a twofold significance, first applying to the geographical locality of the woman, *alias* the city which was the capital of this empire; and secondly, to the succession of her kings.—It need not disturb us that in the scenes of a vision as in the scenes of a night dream, there should be a slight and sudden change or shifting of some of the aspects, as here in v. 3 the woman sits on the beast and in this v. 9 she sits on seven mountains. There is truth in both views, and they are by no means incongruous. Geographically she sat on the well-known seven hills of the great city, Rome; but politically, she sat on the seven-headed and ten-horned beast. These points are of prime importance to identify her in both these respects—her relation to *place*, and her relation to the great political powers of the world.

10. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

I see no reason or room to doubt that the seven kings as well as the seven mountains have each their symbols in the seven heads of the beast. That is, those seven heads had a twofold reference; first to the *geographical position* of this great persecuting power; second, to his political history and character. The latter is the point explained here.—No symbol can be more appropriate than this of a head or a horn upon a beast to denote the kings of a given dynasty or political power. The usage of Daniel is decisive to this point. In his visions (chaps. 7 and 8) horns upon a beast are divinely declared and historically shown to be kings in a political dynasty, or as the case may be, an empire. In these visions shown to John it is simply undeniable that Daniel's visions—beasts and horns—are the antecedent types from which these symbols are taken. Hence the usage of beasts and horns in Daniel should determine their corresponding usage here.—It need occasion no embarrassment that here we have heads as well as horns. There was a demand for both. The ten horns needed to be distinguished from the seven heads. A head is just as good as a horn for the symbol of an individual king.

"There are seven kings." The symbol of the seven-headed beast embraces so many—no more. Of these "the five" (so the Greek has it), *i. e.*, the first five are fallen; the one next in the order of succession is now on his throne; the other, to fill out the seven, is not yet come; but when he comes, he will have but a short reign.—To all this, Roman history accords with perfect precision. This imperial dynasty began with Julius Cæsar. After him reigned the other four who had then fallen, *viz.*, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius—five. All these had fallen at the point when this vision was being shown, and this explanation of it was being given. Nero was the sixth, then on the throne. Galba followed soon, and his "short space" was historically seven months.—Thus with no forced construction but in a most easy and obvious application of the revealing angel's words, we have the great facts of Roman history precisely indicated. An explanation of prophetic symbols, divinely given, ought to tally with history easily and with great precision and accuracy. It surely will if you bring to it the *right* history—*i. e.*, if you have the true application of the symbols to history. This history fits the angel's interpretation of these symbols perfectly. There can be no rational doubt, therefore, that this application of his symbols to history is the true one.

11. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

The seven heads are now disposed of; their history is finished. But the beast still lives. The exigencies and the convenience (we may perhaps say) of the symbols did not require a representation of more than seven heads. Whether this restriction was due to a certain attractive power in the number seven—a power

of usage or of popular taste which puts almost every thing in this book into sevens, it is of no special consequence to decide. But the verse before us plainly shows that the beast survives his seven heads—lives on after they have all fallen; and this I take it is precisely what the angel means to teach in this verse. Having taught us this fact, he drops the whole subject of the heads of the beast, and proceeds to speak of his ten horns.—The manner in which he gives us this great fact of the continued life of the beast after the fall of his seven heads [kings] is very striking, yet very apposite. Thus: The beast who exhibited such marvelous vitality (as was shown in chap. 13)—the beast “that was,” and then seemed not to be, but yet revived again; the beast that every body thought was smitten dead in Julius Cæsar, but which came to life again in Augustus; that beast which would not die, even he is the eighth—his life goes on after the seven heads have fallen; the beast himself is this eighth head [we no longer keep up the symbol of successive heads upon the beast] yet this beast is *of the seven*; he has essentially the same characteristics. There is no special change in this Roman dynasty. It lives under Vespasian, Titus, Commodus, Domitian—but we can not and need not trace their particular history farther. Suffice it to say that in God’s glorious and righteous purpose, this beast is destined to go into perdition. Let the saints take courage. Imperial persecuting Rome is fatally doomed!

Before I pass on from this description of “the beast that was and is not,” it may be due to the well-earned reputation of Prof. Stuart that I should notice his view of the reason why “*is not*” is affirmed of this seven-headed beast. He argues against and rejects the reference to Julius Cæsar, but defends elaborately a supposed reference to Nero.—Against the reference to Julius Cæsar he urges—(1.) That (in 13: 3) the words, “one of his heads,” do not necessarily mean the first one. So far rightly. (2.) That according to the account (13: 3) this one head was not actually but only seemingly killed—“*as it were* wounded to death.” Whereas Julius Cæsar was really killed; therefore the description does not apply to him.—To which I answer: The account shows that the *head* received a mortal wound, but that to the astonishment of the world, the *beast* did not die of this wound, but rallied and lived on. Ordinarily a wound which destroys the life-functions of the head proves fatal to the animal; but in the case of this seven-headed beast, this common law was strangely overruled. Therefore the historic facts respecting Julius Cæsar correspond with admirable precision to the descriptive points made in chapter 13: 3, 12, 14.—(3.) Prof. S. deems it conclusive against the opinion which I have presented, that “the beast in question was a fierce persecutor of the Christian church; whereas Julius Cæsar perished about a century before persecution began.”—Perhaps it did not occur to Prof. S. that he confounds the first head with the beast himself, and that this confusion—this unobserved sub-

stitution of the one for the other, is the only ground of his "conclusive" argument. No doubt this seven-headed beast was a fierce persecutor of the Christian church; but it is nowhere said that the *first head* was, or that the beast was *during the reign of the first head*. Prof. Stuart himself makes Julius the first of the seven heads, but has not deemed it incumbent upon himself therefore to prove that the beast was a fierce persecutor while this first head represented the beast and wielded his power.

Passing to the view maintained by Prof. S., viz., that this wounded head was Nero, it should be said that in his belief Nero was not in fact wounded mortally, much less really killed; but the soothsayers of his time had predicted that he would be slain, and would subsequently rise from the dead and resume his royal power. He does not even suppose that John believed this sooth-saying fiction, but thinks it was currently believed in that age; and therefore the revealing angel spoke of this head as mortally wounded or even as killed, yet that the beast lived again.—To this I reply that such honor shown to the harlotations of the Roman augurs by God's revealing angel is essentially incredible. If the angel had any occasion to refer to their predictions (a thing scarcely supposable) why did he not at least brand them as false and lying? This would have been in harmony with all he actually says of the false prophet (13 : 13-15).—With sincere and profound respect for Prof. Stuart, I yet can not regard this view of his as calling for any other answer.

12. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

13. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

14. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful.

The remaining part of the chapter gives us the ten horns and their relation to the beast and to the harlot city.—These ten horns seem to differ from the seven heads in two prominent respects:—(1.) They are not strictly kings of Rome, but of foreign states—those subjected or allied provinces which at some period "gave their power and strength to the beast" (v. 13); "gave their kingdom unto the beast until the words of God should be fulfilled" (v. 17); but at some other period turned against the harlot—"shall hate the whore and make her desolate," etc. (v. 16).—(2.) They appear to be mainly contemporaneous, not successive. At least they are represented as acting in concert; for awhile they have "received no kingdom as yet;" then, they

“have power as kings one hour with the beast;” then, they “have all one mind, making war with the Lamb, and being overcome”—all as if one power, etc.—Further, it would appear that they come forward upon the arena only after the seven heads have passed away. At the time of the vision, while the sixth head was in power, they had received no kingdom as yet. Also, the period of their co-operation with the beast was short—“one hour.” Yet for a time they work in full harmony with the beast, making war with the Lamb, carrying out the persecuting edicts issued from the Roman throne. To the joy of the church it is declared that even their combined power shall not prevail against the Lamb, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings; therefore though all the kings of the earth combine against him, he conquers. It was pertinent and inspiring to the faith of the first readers of this book to hear it said by this voice from heaven, “And they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.” Under such appreciative and animating words, who could fail to say, So let us endure to the end; so let us fight the battles of our Great King! It is worth the universe to have such testimony from his lips that he appreciates our fidelity and endurance even unto blood.—To the question, What nations and provinces are represented by these ten kings? I need only answer, The subjected, tributary and allied provinces generally during the ages referred to. I take “ten” to be a round, indefinite number, and am therefore by no means careful to find precisely that number; no more, no less. The student of Roman history will readily think of Spain, the Gauls, the Germans, the provinces of ancient Greece, of Western Asia, and of Egypt and Northern Africa.

15. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

It might seem at first view that this allusion to the waters upon which the woman sat is out of place in the midst of an otherwise connected account of the ten kings. But a closer view will show it to be precisely *in place*. Rome sat on scores of subject thrones. She had brought within her walls the spoils, the standards, the enslaved captives, the conquered kings of a vast number of subject kingdoms, of various peoples, from every quarter of the then known and civilized world. It was over these subject kingdoms that the ten kings are supposed to reign. Hence this is precisely the place to refer to this great historic fact—her relations to her foreign conquests and to her now subject provinces.—It will be noticed that this verse explains the last clause of v. 1—“the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.”

16. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

17. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

The Sinaitic and Alexandrine manuscripts (not to mention others) concur in reading, not "*upon* the beast," but "*and* the beast" [not *epi*, but *kai*]. We have here therefore a new and remarkable fact respecting both the ten horns and the beast of which they form a part, viz., that they shall turn against this harlot city, shall make her desolate and naked, shall devour her flesh and burn her with fire. The "making naked" is the ancient prophetic threatening against the old harlot Jerusalem put with terrible force by Ezekiel (16: 36-39), and which is probably imitated here. So, burning with fire was the punishment definitely named by Ezekiel (16: 41); by Judah, as to be inflicted on Tamar (Gen. 38: 24); and by the Mosaic law, in the case of a priest's daughter guilty of whoredom (Lev. 21: 9). For similar reasons fire bears a prominent part in the judgment that fell on Great Babylon as defined in chap. 18. See vs. 8, 18.—The historical meaning and fulfillment of this is that these outlying provinces, and apparently even the imperial power itself, shall in due time turn against the harlot city (Rome), and become the instrument in God's hand for her punishment. The agency of God in this case is deemed worthy of special notice—"For God hath put it in their heart to fulfill his will, and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled." So God has been wont to make the wrath of man praise himself. All along the ages he has shown himself able to use with infinite facility Assyrians, Chaldeans, Persians or Romans to execute his will in judgments upon the guilty. Hence first they appear in co-operation with the beast in making war with the Lamb (v. 14); and next, in hating the harlot city and bringing down the retributions of eternal justice upon her (vs. 16, 17). This seems to imply that in the course of events the beast and his ten horns no longer befriend and protect the city of Rome, but under the over-ruling hand of God turn with exterminating force against her. "The ten horns *and* the beast hate the whore and burn her with fire" (v. 16); the horns give their kingdom to the beast to fulfill the will of God in the destruction of the harlot city until God's retributions upon her are completed.—Here the question will arise—To what great facts of history can these points in this prophecy refer? I answer in general—that the history of the decline and fall of the Roman empire testifies most amply that these outlying provinces and kingdoms, especially those of central Europe (Gauls, Germans, Goths, etc.) and of central Asia (the Parthians especially), became the terrible executioners of God's wrath upon old Rome. So much for the ten horns. But this is not all. The imperial power itself was transferred to Constantinople, and then became naturally the antagonist and desolator of Rome. It should be borne in mind also that the

genius of the symbol requires that the beast should live in his ten horns, should work in and through them during their active life, just as the beast was in the seven heads, and wrought in and with them during their activity. Coupling this principle with the historic transfer of the imperial power to a rival city, we see no lack of historic fulfillment in these predictions taken in their most obvious sense.

18. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

This verse precisely defines the woman seen in vision as described above (vs. 1-6). She represents precisely old Pagan Rome. The language can apply to no other city of those times. Regard should certainly be had to the present tense of this verb, "reigneth." The original Greek is, "which has or holds regal sway"—a "kingdom," "over all the kings of the earth." No language could affirm more strongly than this that such was her then present status; that the angel speaks, not of some remotely future time, but of that very time when he was speaking. I touch this fact because it bears with resistless force against the theory which assumes this woman to be Papal Rome. For the temporal power of Rome Papal was never over the kings of *all the earth*, and it did not reach its maximum until nearly a thousand years after the time then *present*—the true date of this book. Such forcing of prophetic words out of their natural and fixed sense should be sedulously avoided, not to say strongly reprobated.



CHAPTER XVIII.

The theme of this chapter is one—a very minute delineation of the sins, the luxury, the traffic, and the fall of Great Babylon. Conceived of as the mart of the nations, the great center of trade and commerce,—the merchants and seafaring men of the earth bewail her fall as ruinous to their prosperity.—The drapery of this chapter comes from the prophecies concerning Babylon as they appear in Jer. 50 and 51, and Isa. 13 and 14; and of Tyre as in Ezek. 26 to 28 inclusive. The associations connected with the name "Babylon" would suggest the numerous and minute points of those prophecies which predict her fall; while the remarkably close analogies between Tyre as the great commercial city of ancient times and this mystic Babylon whose harlotry [idolatry] was strongly associated with traffic and commerce, naturally brought in those graphic and minute predictions of

Ezekiel.—It can not escape the reader's notice that this painting of the life and the fall of Great Babylon makes prominent her luxury and her commerce. The question will arise—How shall we understand this? Is it a sin to trade? Was this her damning sin, that she bought and sold and did business with the whole civilized world?—The answer must be—that while there may be a vast amount of selfishness, cupidity and fraud in trade, and although ancient Rome may have had her share of these sins; and although luxury conduces fearfully to sensuality, pride and moral hardihood in sin, yet there are cogent reasons for taking these descriptive points of Babylon as symbols of her idolatry and of her corrupting influence in this respect over the leading minds and the great nations of her time. Let it be noted that old Rome was never specially prominent for commerce; she never was, like Tyre, the mart of the nations; probably was even less prominent in this respect than her namesake—the old Chaldean Babylon. Note also that in a few passages this symbol (commerce) is dropped, and her sins are put in the well known Hebrew figures—fornication, *i. e.*, spiritual harlotry, real idolatry, thus;—"All nations have drunk of the hot wine of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her" (v. 3). "And the kings of the earth have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her," etc. (v. 9). Yet farther consider that foreign commerce was alien from the spirit of the Mosaic institutions because it would beget too intimate associations with heathen people and thus expose them to idolatry; that the word "Canaanite" meant "merchant" as well as a man of Canaan (Hos. 12: 7), and hence the very name would be odious to the true Israelite and naturally associated with the vices and the religions of the worst idolaters; that these ideas were so prevalent in the Hebrew mind that Isaiah (23: 15-18), speaking of Tyre, uses the words "harlot," "harlot-hire," "fornication" and "merchandize," as essentially synonymous. If to all this we add the natural influence of such a model before the mind as those chapters of Ezekiel (26-28) which treat of the fall of Tyre and give so large a place to her trade and to her commercial relations with all the people of the East, we shall readily see that the luxury and trade of this great Babylon must have primary reference to her idolatry and to her pernicious influence in this respect upon the nations of the earth.

In this chapter a mighty angel comes from heaven and announces the fall of "Great Babylon" (vs. 1, 2); assigns briefly the reasons for it (v. 3); another voice from heaven calls the people of God to come out from her (v. 4); and testifies to God's retributions upon her (vs. 5, 6); puts in contrast her sins and her fall (vs. 7, 8); gives the wail of her guilty associates in crime (vs. 9-11); and presents under the symbols and terms of trade, a detailed view of her sins (vs. 12-14); returns again to the wails of her companions in idolatry (vs. 15-19). Let the earth rejoice in her fall, for it is God's avenging hand upon their murderers (v

20). Babylon falls like a great millstone into the sea (v. 21), and ringing notes of joy are heard in her no more (v. 22, 23), but the blood of martyrs is found there—the procuring cause of her fearful and fatal fall (v. 24).

1. And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

2. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

This was one of the mighty angels. His descent illumined the earth with the blaze of his glory.—There can be no doubt that this great Babylon is the same whose fall was first spoken of in similar terms in chap. 14: 8 and again in 16: 19.—The original Greek gives us, not “*the* habitation of devils,” as if it were the abode of them all and the only one, but “a habitation”—one of the places where they congregate and dwell. So also, not “*the* hold of every foul spirit,” but “a hold,” *i. e.*, a strong hold, a sort of prison, a place of close abode. Babylon became desecrated, accursed—much as is said of her prototype (Isa. 13: 19–22), and also of Idumea (Isa. 34: 11–15).

3. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

The word rendered “abundance” is the common one for power, dynamic force [*dunamis*], but here used for the prodigiously strong seductive influences of her luxury and of her proud voluptuousness. These terms probably refer primarily to her influence toward idolatry and its associate vices. The hot wine which she administered to her paramours fired and maddened their passions toward that lewdness which primarily means the giving of the heart and the life to idol-worship. But inasmuch as idolatry and lewdness were always associated in fact and not in symbol only, the true view should perhaps include them both in such descriptions as we have in this chapter.

4. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

Even as God through Jeremiah warned his people to escape from old Babylon in the day of her impending fall (Jer. 50: 8, and 51: 6, 45)—“Flee out of the midst of Babylon and deliver

every man his soul; he not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the Lord's vengeance," etc., so here, nothing could be more natural or more appropriate than this summons, "Come out of her, my people;" first, lest ye share in her sins; next, lest ye have also her plagues. Remaining in Babylon would involve a double danger; first, of moral corruption; second, of physical destruction. For both reasons let all who hear and fear the warning voice of God escape from Babylon.—Some commentators give the word "sins" ["partakers of her sins"] the sense of punishment for sin, and thus make these two clauses essentially one; flee lest ye partake of the punishment of her sins and of her plagues. But this is an unusual sense of the word for "sins," and therefore should not be assumed without urgent reason; besides that the Greek word rendered "partakers of" involves the idea of most intimate fellowship, meaning precisely, lest ye *make her sins common* to yourself and to her.

5. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

The oldest manuscripts (the Sinaitic and Alexandrine) with the concurrence of recent editors, reject the Greek verb which means to follow [*ακολουθεω*] and accept one which means to cleave together [*κολλωω*]. The figure implied in the verb is that of cleaving together till the mass mounted heaven-high, Babel-like. The sentiment is that her sins have come up into remembrance before God for righteous punishment.

6. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double.

The tone of this verse is simply just and righteous retribution. The earlier authorities for the text omit "you" in the clause, "rewarded you," reading it, Render to her even as she has rendered, *i. e.*, to others generally.—I regard this command as addressed not to God's people on earth, but rather to those angelic agents who were to be the executioners of God's judgments.—There is no occasion to press the words here used to the literal and extreme sense of giving to Babylon double what she deserved, or even double what she had rendered of affliction and oppression to the saints. This ancient Hebrew phrase means full, complete retribution—nothing more. Essentially the same language appears in Isa. 40: 20, and 61: 7. The idea of rendering substantial retribution to this Babylon may have been suggested by the repeated threatenings of like retribution upon the first Babylon, whose case was then vividly before the mind of John. This may be seen in Jer. 50: 15, 29. "As she hath done, do unto her." "Recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her." Also Jer. 51: 24, 49. "I will

render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the Lord." "As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth."

7. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

Her pride had been her curse. According to the measure of her self-glorifying and her luxurious display, so shall she be requited with torment and mourning.—What she is supposed to "say in her heart" is imitated from her great prototype, the first Babylon, and from her sister Nineveh, as may be seen in Isaiah 47: 7, 8: "Thou saidst, I will be a lady forever." "That sayest in thine heart, I am and none else beside me. I shall never sit as a widow," etc. Also Zeph. 2: 15: "This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am and there is none beside me."

8. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

In the last clause the improved reading has the word "judgeth" in the past, not the present tense; meaning who *has* previously judged her, in the sense that he has passed sentence upon her and now he executes it.—The being utterly burned with fire refers tacitly to the legal punishment [in some cases] for adultery. See notes on 17: 16.—The suddenness of this threatened doom on great Babylon as well as various other features in this description seem to follow the prophetic foreshowing of the fall of the first Babylon. In her case the facts of history were that the first blow fell suddenly in one fearful night; but the utter and final ruin of the city filled out centuries.—The facts of history in the case of Rome will come up for special consideration when all the points of this prophecy shall be fully before us.

9. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,

10. Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

For the sense in which "the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her" see notes on 17: 2.—The conception of the kings of the earth "standing afar off for the fear of her tor-

ment" and looking as if from some mountain peak upon the smoke of her burning to bewail the fall of that "great," that "mighty city," is mournfully impressive. It can not well be doubted that the prototype of this conception is Abraham, early in the morning, "looking toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the plain, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace" (Gen. 19: 28). Not unlike this is the last scene in the prophet Isaiah (66: 24): "All flesh shall come up to worship before me; and they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, *neither shall their fire be quenched*, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." The fires and the smoke of Gehenna (valley of Hinnom) lie forever in view from the overlooking walls of the city of God's worshipers. But here in this wailing scene, the mourners are her sympathizing friends, and they are smitten not only with sympathetic grief but with unutterable consternation lest the doom of Babylon should foreshadow their own, and they should wake some dreadful morning to find the fires of divine retribution kindling upon their palaces and engulfing their souls in ruin!

11. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:

12. The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,

13. And cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

That the merchants of the earth bear so prominent a part here may be due somewhat to the attractive influence of that remarkably analogous scene sketched most graphically by Ezekiel—the fall of Tyre (chap. 26-28). He places before us Tyre, "situate at the entry of the sea, a merchant of the people for many isles," and says: "Tarshish was thy merchant; Javan, Tubal and Meshech were thy merchants; Syria, Damascus, Judah also;"—indeed all the nations of the then civilized world: and then in the filling out of this scene, these merchants and mariners all "shall cry bitterly and shall cast up dust upon their heads; they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing, and in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee." "What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea!" So the traffickers with old Rome whose heart and hand had been

with hers in voluptuousness, idolatry and oppression are now chief mourners over her fall. This sketching imitates Ezekiel in the remarkable minuteness of the description and in that rare felicity of moral painting which makes every distinct feature serve to intensify the one grand impression of the whole scene.—In the last clause of v. 13, the original gives us, not any word meaning precisely *slave*, but the usual word for bodies [Sómata]. Naming the bodies and the souls of men in apparent antithesis with each other may perhaps mean: They trafficked in every sort of thing; they even made merchandise of *men*, both body and soul! What more could they find to buy and to sell? What on earth is too sacred for their covetous fingers? What is there that they will not desecrate into merchandise and barter it for paltry gold?—I judge there can be no doubt that the sale of men for slaves is the special thing intended, and not only intended but stringently rebuked—held up to the abhorrence of mankind and as an abomination to the righteous God!

14. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

15. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

16. And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

“Dainty and goodly” in the sense of luxurious and splendid or shining.—Instead of the second verb, “departed” [“are departed from thee”], the better manuscripts give us the stronger word—have *perished* from thee.—Here the merchants, like the kings in vs. 9, 10, stand afar off for the fear of her torment and lift up their wailing cry over her sudden and fearful fall!

17. For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

18. And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What *city* is like unto this great city!

19. And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

The first clause of v. 17 ought to have been the close of v. 16. Then the mariners are brought to view, precisely as we find in

Ezekiel 27.—Instead of “all the company in ships,” the oldest manuscripts give us—“Every one who saileth by the place,” *i. e.*, all who shall ever pass that way and come in sight of her smoking ruins.—The Greek words rendered “*trade by sea*” mean strictly “*work the sea*,” with probably reference to plying and plowing the sea with their oars. Navigation was *working* the sea then in a somewhat stronger sense than now.—These mariners make a third class (after kings and merchants) who wail as they see the smoke of her burning, and join the grand chorus of bitter lamentation.

20. Rejoice over her, *thou* heaven, and *ye* holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

The improved text gives us instead of “holy apostles,” “ye saints and apostles and prophets.”—This joy to which all heaven is summoned should never be thought of as a purely selfish, much less as a malicious, exultation over a fallen enemy, but as a joy in the triumph of righteousness; a joy in the fall of oppressors and persecutors whose power was simple and utter antagonism against human salvation, against the highest good of men on earth and of saints and angels in heaven. As in the case of bloody Jerusalem, so in this case of not less bloody Rome, the martyrs had lain at the foot of the altar, crying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on those who withstand thy cause, forbid the spread of thy gospel, and murder thy faithful saints?—And here comes the answer to the spirit of their cry: “Rejoice, for God has avenged you on great Babylon.”—Analogous to this was the song over the first great Babylon: “Then the heaven and the earth and all that is therein shall sing for Babylon” (Jer. 51: 48).

21. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast *it* into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

This is probably an imitation of Jer. 51: 63, 64, where the prophet is commanded to bind a stone to the book of his prophecy and cast it into the midst of Euphrates and say, “Thus shall Babylon sink and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her.” Here the action is grand, magnificent—in the spirit of this entire book. A mighty angel (not a feeble prophet) takes up a stone like a great millstone, and casts it into the sea. So great Babylon, old Rome as a persecuting power, must go down, to rise no more.

22. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft *he be*, shall be

found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone **shall** be heard no more at all in thee;

23. And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

The fall of a great city is shown here impressively in its results—silence and desolation. The joyous sounds of busy, happy life are heard in her no more; the light of the candle shines there no more; the happy voices of bridegroom and bride shall ring out through her festive halls no more. Sorrow and gloom are there; darkness and desolation bear sway, and there is none to resist.—The moral reason comes in appropriately—“for by thy sorceries were all the nations deceived.” She had seduced the world away from their great Creator to the worship of idols and devils. Therefore she must drink the cup of retribution!

24. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

God had made inquisition there for blood—and found it! There lay upon her the blood of prophets and of saints; the holy and the good of earth had perished there, and their blood had cried to God for retribution—had cried, and not in vain!

At this point it is proper to give special attention to an objection raised against the application of chap. 18, and its connected and parallel passages, to Pagan Rome, viz., The prophecy requires that this mystic Babylon should fall *suddenly*, and also, should fall *utterly* and *forever*: but this can not apply to Rome because Rome did not fall *suddenly*, nor can it apply to any fall of Rome that has yet transpired because Rome is yet standing.

To this I reply:—1. There is need of caution against the fallacy of assuming that the name *Rome* represents throughout all historic ages the same thing. If the mystic Babylon of this prophecy means Rome (as I have supposed), it of course means only the Rome of the age of Nero—not the Rome of every possible age—not necessarily the Rome of eighteen hundred years after Nero.—The reader will especially observe that the “great city” of this prophecy, the harlot woman, Babylon, is (a) the queen city of the world, “reigning over the kings of the earth;” (b) is supremely idolatrous, the mother city of Paganism and of its abominations; (c) is a great persecuting power, making herself drunk with the blood of Christian martyrs.—It is only as such that she appears before us in this prophecy. When in these aspects she falls and dies, then she is dead to all the intents and purposes of this prophecy. There may still be a place called Rome, but the harlot city of this book, this mystic Babylon, has sunk from the page of

history, and the prophecy is fulfilled.—2. The history of *the* Rome which stood before the prophet's eye in the age of Nero should be attentively studied.—Nothing could have been further from the thought of Edward Gibbon, when he sat down one hundred years ago to write "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," than to make out an historic fulfillment of this prophecy as applied to Pagan Rome. Yet the simple demands of historic truth gave him the appropriate terms—"Decline and Fall." The empire went down. The city was repeatedly captured and sacked, its ancient glory rapidly waned, and sunk at length to its political grave.—Note also that the Rome of this prophecy perished in the most disastrous way possible—*by ulceration of the heart*—corruption and death at her vitals. That virile energy which had made her arms every-where victorious and her name a terror to the civilized world, was gradually emasculated; her legions, once invincible, became weak as other men, and even lent their sword, not to sustain the empire, but to crush it. Her citizens, lost to virtue, could no longer bear good rulers. That she should have the vilest and worst men that ever lived for her emperors became her inevitable doom—the torment of her life, the misery of her people, the ruin of the empire, the wreck of her glory. To give in detail the facts of which the essence is condensed into these paragraphs would be to rewrite the history of the Decline and Fall of Pagan Rome.

It will not be amiss however to suggest that the agencies assigned in this prophecy to the ten kings (17: 12-17) is remarkably true to history, on the supposition that those kings were the foreign powers which for a season gave their strength to the beast (v. 13), but ultimately turned to "hate" the harlot city and make her desolate (v. 16). No broad fact of Roman history is more patent than this—that the outlying kingdoms and provinces which for a time lent their strength to augment her splendor as well as to enlarge her empire, in process of time turned their arms upon her and became the main agents in her desolation. Gauls, Germans, Parthians, dealt telling blows toward her weakness and shame in the earlier stages of her decline; Goths, the western and the eastern, Huns, Vandals, poured in upon her in her later stages to hurl her down to her ir retrievable fall. The transfer of her best strength to the center of the Great Eastern Empire conspired also to the ruin of Imperial Rome. The ten horns of the beast on which the woman sat became ultimately the instruments under God's hand and will to her destruction. Thus marvelously did it come to pass that history wrote over again this prophecy of the ten horns of this beast as related to the final retributions of God upon this harlot city.

One of the methods of estimating both the corruptions of the imperial power and the miseries of the imperial city is to group the personal history of its successive monarchs. How many in any given period were miscreants, notorious only for their vices; how

many reigned only to curse their people; how many died by violence because the world could bear their presence no longer; how many reigned less than five years, multiplying those civil revolutions that crimson the best families with blood. To reach the general results of such a table, we may embrace a period of two hundred and thirty years subsequent to the death of Nero. Then omitting the four reigns of Trajan, Adrian, and the two Antonines, we shall find proximately thirty-six emperors with an average reign of four years, of whom twenty-three died by assassination, or the alternative of suicide, out of whom it would be hard to find one who did not richly deserve the death he died. The greater part of these emperors were simply *monsters* in crime. Of Caracalla, perhaps somewhat worse than an average specimen, history records that he murdered his brother Geta, partner with himself in the empire, in the very arms of their common mother, and then consecrated in the temple of Serapis that sword bathed in a brother's blood; that under the vague appellation of "the friends of Geta," above twenty thousand persons of both sexes suffered death by a proscription which "endeavored to reach every one who had maintained the smallest correspondence with Geta, who lamented his death, or who even mentioned his name." After one year thus spent at Rome, he filled out the remaining five of his reign and life traversing the several provinces of the empire, "making each one by turns the scene of his rapine and cruelty." "In the midst of peace and upon the slightest provocation he issued his command at Alexandria in Egypt for a general massacre. From a scene post in the temple of Serapis he viewed and directed the slaughter of many thousand citizens as well as strangers, without distinguishing either the number or the crime of the sufferers, since, as he coolly informed the senate, '*all* the Alexandrians, both those who had perished and those who had escaped, were alike guilty.'" (Gibbon I: 160.) No wonder that Gibbon brands him as "the common enemy of mankind." Yet "the soldiers obliged the senate to prostitute their own dignity and that of religion by granting him [at death] a place among the gods."—Yet this man was the product of his age. His horrible crimes and the no less horrible character which begat them had their causes in the moral and social rottenness of the body politic. Rome was slowly dying of her own intrinsic corruption. There is no death more horrible. It may be a lingering one, protracted through one or more centuries; but who can over-estimate the horrors of a nation's death prolonged and drawn out through centuries? The Omnipotent Arm might have sunk Rome in one short hour by an earthquake; the doom of Herculaneum and Pompeii might have swept her name and memorial from the page of history for eighteen hundred years; and some would deem this a far more exact fulfillment of the prophecies in this eighteenth chapter than her actual history has given us. But whoever shall carefully estimate the comparative miseries of these two methods of divine retribution will at least

conclude there is room for grave question. It seems beyond dispute that in those distinctly marked respects in which this mystic Babylon appears before us in these chapters, Pagan Rome did in fact go down and perish. She ceased to be the queen city of the world, "reigning over the kings of the earth;" her influence toward idolatry was broken, and after Constantine her persecuting power as pagan and idolatrous was at an end.

But still the inquiry should be fairly met:—Can we accept these historic facts as a fulfillment of this prophecy? Are we authorized to give these visions so free a construction that their representations shall be essentially met in the broad facts of this history of the decline and fall of Pagan Rome?

1. In the first place, whatever this "great city" may be, we can not object that this prophecy should present it under the symbol of some great city doomed to destruction in the prophecies of the Old Testament. This is the uniform usage of this book of Revelation. Its symbols, its sketchings, its colorings are taken from the Old Testament prophets. It is of no avail for us to demand a different usage from this in the case of this great city.

2. The fact that this city takes the mystic name "Babylon" carries us at once and inevitably to the old Babylon as the type of this great city. Whichever of the great cities of Nero's time (the date of this writing) this one may be, she is a *second* "Babylon," and the prophecies that doomed the Chaldean Babylon to fall are before the mind and furnish in part the figures and conceptions to set forth the fall of this great city.—A careful comparison of chap. 18 with Ezekiel's predictions of the fall of Tyre (chap. 26–28) will satisfy candid minds that those prophecies also were definitely in view and were in many points imitated in these descriptions. Consequently this mystic Babylon is compared by John with the old Chaldean Babylon and with the Tyre of Ezekiel. The language and figures here are drawn from the prophetic delineations there.

3. Now let it be borne in mind that the main points of the objection before us are that according to this prophecy, its mystic Babylon ought to fall both *suddenly* and *utterly*; and therefore Pagan Rome which fell neither suddenly nor utterly can not be the city here prophetically doomed. Bearing directly upon this objection two points challenge our candid consideration.—(a.) That neither Babylon nor Tyre fell both suddenly and utterly, as the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel might seem to demand. True, the first blow on Babylon was sudden; but she survived it; she rallied again and stood a magnificent city at least till the age of Alexander—fully two hundred years. Thenceforward she went down slowly with a decline that stretched through other centuries before the prophecy was fully accomplished. So Tyre fell before the arms of Nebuchadnezzar not long after the date of Ezekiel's prophecy. But Tyre rallied again and rose to probably greater splendor than ever before. Nearly two centuries

more of prosperous life intervened before the next stunning blow fell on her from the arms of the great Alexander. Even after this she revived and other long ages intervened before the era of utter desolation came upon her. Yet no sensible interpreter hesitates a moment in applying the prophecies here referred to respectively to Babylon and to Tyre. The prophecies themselves are perfectly definite and explicit in such application. We are therefore compelled to grant that such language as that which describes Babylon as going down into the mighty deep like a millstone (Jer. 51: 63, 64) does not mean necessarily that the city must go down as with an earthquake engulfing it bodily—walls, towers, palaces and people, in one vast burial beneath the ground. It is possible to press such language beyond its true intent. Something must be conceded to the bold genius of poetic conception. Essentially the same may be said of Tyre, the prophecy being—"When I shall make thee a desolate city." . . . "When I shall bring up the deep over thee and great waters shall cover thee." . . . "I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more," etc.; and yet the fulfillment, as said above, shows that her decline and fall were by successive stages at quite remote intervals, not altogether unlike the decline and fall of ancient Pagan Rome.—(b.) But there is still another fact equally demanding consideration. We can not insist that a copy like this before us in John should be (as to its meaning and therefore its fulfillment) a precise imitation of its original as he found it in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. For it is unquestionably a fact that a considerable degree of latitude is admitted where a prophet borrows language and imagery from a previously written prophecy or from history. Thus for example the Messiah is prophetically set forth as a second David. Ps. 2 and 45, and 110, are in this strain. The second psalm would seem on the face of it to make him a bloody, all-crushing warrior, "breaking the nations with a rod of iron, dashing them in pieces as a potter's vessel" (v. 9). But when we intelligently apply this to Jesus Christ, we make large allowances for the influence of the model reign, that of the warlike David, in shaping the thought and expression of the prophecy as related to the Messiah. We say—Jesus is indeed a conqueror; but of hearts, not of walled cities; by the power of truth and of love, and not of an iron rod; melting human souls to tenderness, and not crushing them precisely as a potter's vessel.—So Ps. 45 reads, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh;" "thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies whereby the people fall under thee;" yet we notice that the New Testament writers have quite modified the warlike tone and air of these prophetic symbols, for with them it is "the word of God" that is "sharper than any two-edged sword and that pierces" even to the severing of soul and body. It must be admitted then that the prophetic model before the mind has commanding influence in shaping the style and expression of writers of prophecy. It would be no easy task to draw a given

line and say—So far, within precisely these limitations, the copy must keep to its original. Hence we can not quite say that John's description of the fall of the mystic Babylon must be kept with precise historic accuracy to the sense of the prophecies of old Babylon as interpreted by history. Some latitude is admissible (who can say precisely how much?) within which the second Babylon—this of John—may vary, in the mode of its decline and fall, from the type of the first.—And here let no one exclaim against all prophecy as too indefinite to be reliable or in anywise useful. Let him rather say—It behooves us to study carefully its laws and its usage, and to look rather for general than for entirely specific correspondence between prophecy and its fulfilling history. A general correspondence between this prophecy of the fall of this second Babylon and the fall of the first Babylon as verified in history, we do undeniably find. The Rome of the time of John was in fact blighted and scathed, tortured and smitten; her imperial power broken; her idolatrous influence crushed out; her persecuting terrors quenched in God's own way, by judgments which might well make every ear tingle and every heart quail. A city called Rome is indeed standing now, nearly on the site of that Rome of old; but is it the same city—imperial now as then? mistress of the nations now as then? deifying her emperors and compelling Christians to bow before her idolatrous military standards now as then? persecuting with fire and sword, with exile and torture, now as then? *Not at all!* This Rome and that have nothing in common but the name. The old Rome of the age of John, the Rome that sat on the seven-headed and ten-horned beast, has been politically defunct fifteen centuries. The Babylon of Jeremiah and the Tyre of Ezekiel are not more certainly dead and gone than the second Babylon and the second Tyre of the Apocalypse—assuming these symbols to allude precisely to the Rome of the age of Nero in her prominent and special characteristics—world-wide supremacy; social and political power consecrated to idolatry and to bloody persecution. Whatever may be true of what is now called Rome, that old Rome has long since drunk from the hand of the Great God of Providence the cup of his indignation. The nations that were in her sympathy long ago sang their requiem, or rather poured out their wail of grief over her irretrievable fall! No such Rome has been known in the world's history for long ages.—My conclusion therefore is that the objections in question are rather plausible than real; that they rest on assumptions not borne out by the laws and usages of scripture prophecy; and largely on the fallacy of confounding the Rome of John's age with the city called Rome to-day. Overruling such objections as irrelevant and not sustained, I accept the application of these prophecies of the mystic Babylon to Pagan Rome.

CHAPTER XIX.

This chapter is in two principal parts; vs. 1-10 presenting chiefly the exultation in heaven over the judgment of the great harlot city and the consequent success of the gospel in the redemption of souls from sin and the preparation of the bride for the marriage of the Lamb.—Vs. 11-21 give us the great moral battle-field of time, seen in a sort of heavenly *perspective*, on the principle that the great moral events of earth have their prototypes in heaven. A mighty Conqueror on the white horse of victory appears armed for battle and conquest; his faithful warriors follow him, they too arrayed in robes of purity and seated on white horses, in like manner symbolic of victory. Anticipating immense carnage, an angel summons all the fowls of mid-heaven to feast upon the flesh of the slain. The battle seems about to be joined, but the foes of this Conqueror are powerless; there is no conflict; forthwith the beast and his false prophet are violently seized and cast alive into the lake of fire. All their dupes and followers are slain with the great sword of the mighty Conqueror, and his victory is complete.

1. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God:

2. For true and righteous *are* his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

3. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

Slight and not specially important textual corrections in v. 1 insert "as it were" before "great voice;" omit "and honor;" and give us instead of "unto the Lord our God," simply "of our God," so that the verse, improved, would read, "After this I heard as it were a great voice of a vast multitude in heaven, saying, Alleluia! the salvation and the glory and the power of God!" This I take to be an exclamation of adoring wonder, testifying that the salvation and the glory and the power of our God have received sublime and glorious manifestations.—For his predicted judgments have been proved true by their fulfillment, and also just in their very nature in view of the horrible guilt of the great harlot who made the earth rotten with moral corruption and herself drunk with the blood of martyred saints, now avenged by the Righteous Judge! Again, they cry, Alleluia! The reader will recognize this as the Greek equivalent of the

Hebrew Hallelujah, which means, *Praise ye Jah, i. e., Jehovah, the Lord.*—"And her smoke rose up," witnessing to the judgments of the great and righteous God upon her, and seeming to imply that this testimony to her righteous doom was before the very eyes of the adoring and grateful worshipers. They accepted this judgment of God on the corrupt and bloody harlot as righteous and glorious and as a call for grateful thanksgiving because they *felt* its justice; they knew its necessity for the progress and triumph of the gospel of salvation and for the honor and stability of the throne of the Almighty.—Do not scenes occur in human affairs which testify that murderers *ought to die*, that rebels and rebellion must go down ere peace and order and law *can* reign?

4. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshiped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

Here as in chapters 4 and 5 these representative personages appear, testifying to their intense sympathy in the scenes now transpiring.

5. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

6. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

It is not said who uttered this voice, only that it seemed to come forth from the very throne of God. It summoned all the servants of God to one united utterance of praise, *and every heart responded!* The revelator heard what seemed the shout of a countless host, like the deep roar of the great ocean and as the reverberation of mighty thunderings—and their cry was, "Praise Jehovah! for the Lord our God, the Omnipotent, has begun to reign!" The Greek tense used here [the aorist] seems strictly to mean, not the present—he reigneth now; and not exclusively the past—he *has* reigned; but he has entered upon his promised reign and therefore may be expected henceforward to maintain his sway, and go on conquering and to conquer till every foe shall have fallen and his conquest of the world shall be complete. The nature of this reign should be studied in connection with those passages which declare—"All power is given to me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28: 18). "There be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16: 28). "He shall reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15: 25). See notes on Rev. 11: 15, 17, and 2: 10.

7. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

9. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

The reader will not fail to notice the tacit but close relation between the fall of the harlot city, Rome, and the triumphant success of the gospel in bringing forth its fruits—a holy people prepared of God through grace to be the bride of the Lamb. Her moral and spiritual preparation, her purity and her intrinsic moral beauty are more prominent here than the nuptial scene. There is no attempt to describe the marriage itself or the great marriage-supper, farther than to say—Blessed are they whose pure hearts insure their being invited and made welcome! Then let it evermore be our first care and endeavor to be clad in that fine linen, radiant and pure; for to this the strain of our passage would exhort us.—Note also that while the first allusion makes prominent the Christian's own moral agency—"his wife hath *made herself* ready"—yet as if to guard against overdoing that thought, it is subjoined, "It was *given* to her" (through God's free grace) "that she should be arrayed in fine linen"—which means the righteousness of saints, and of which Paul has said with equal pertinence, truth and beauty—"not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3: 9). —"And *he* said." Who is this "*he*?" Manifestly the same personage who describes himself in v. 10, practically an angel-interpreter whose mission was to stand by the revelator John in his visions; sometimes to explain, and sometimes as here to suggest what should be written for the edification of the churches:—He now directs John to write two things: first, Blessed are those who are called to this marriage-supper; and secondly, that these words of God are true and that events now about to happen, or at least to be revealed, would abundantly attest their truth. I assume that the statement does not merely affirm in general that all God's words are true, nor in particular that these are, but more than this—that their truth will be made gloriously plain and most undeniably evident in the events about to occur. When you come to this great marriage-supper you will see how true it is that the invited guests gathered there are blessed!

10. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and

of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

A similar scene is narrated in chap. 22: 6-9, where again John fell down to worship before the feet of the revealing angel. Remarkably the antecedents also were the same there as here—thrilling promises: there, the blessedness of him who keeps the prophecies of this book, as here, of those called to the marriage-supper; coupled also with a like averment; there, "These sayings are faithful and true;" as here, "These are the true sayings of God." Deeply we may suppose John felt their truth and most intensely did he appreciate the blessedness promised; and therefore in the warmth and fullness of his soul, perhaps scarcely conscious what he did, and possibly assuming that his own Lord Jesus was concealed beneath the form of this revealing angel, he offered him such worship as was appropriate only to one truly divine. The angel checked him in both cases with the same words:—"Take care *not*;" Beware not to do that thing; "for I am [only] a fellow-servant of thyself and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." It should be noticed that in Rev. 22: 9 we have language slightly different, yet in sense doubtless the same—"A fellow-servant of thyself and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them who keep the sayings of this book; worship God."—A question will arise here in some minds—more curious than useful—viz., whether this revealing angel were not some departed saint—Moses, Elijah or perhaps Isaiah.—To this I reply briefly:—(1.) Nothing is said here at all inconsistent with the assumption that he is simply one of the holy angels of the heavenly world, for they are not only intensely interested but actually employed in diverse ministrations of service for God's people on earth (Heb. 1: 12).—(2.) This book of Revelation is full, in every chapter and almost every verse, of these ministrations of the real angels—not glorified saints from earth, but those elder brethren of ours, evermore sinless—always ready to minister with glad heart in any way to the work of God and of Jesus Christ in this world. There is therefore the strongest presumption that this one belongs to the same class.—(3.) There is nothing else in the Bible which at all favors the idea that departed saints come back to us in positive ministries of service. Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus transfigured on the mount and talked with him there; but this was no ordinary ministry of service to the saints, and is the only recorded case in which they appear on earth as having come down from heaven. I conclude therefore that there is no valid ground for this opinion and consequently must regard it as a fancy better served in its rejection than by its indulgence.

The last clause of the verse demands our attention, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." What does this mean? and why is it said just here?—Our received translation precisely represents the original Greek both in the words them-

selves and in their consecutive order.—The first question is—Which is the subject of the verb, “The testimony of Jesus,” or “The spirit of prophecy?” That is, Does the speaker mean that testifying for Jesus involves and includes the spirit of prophecy, or that prophecy in its true spirit testifies of Jesus?—Some have preferred the latter construction, referring it to the fact that the Old Testament prophets witnessed abundantly to the then future Messiah, and that the same spirit of prophecy had yet more to say of the future glories of his kingdom. But unless there be some very good reason, the words should be taken in the order in which they stand, the subject of the verb before it, and the predicate after. This consideration bears against the construction last named. The natural order is admissible here and is therefore preferable; and furthermore, it seems to me to have a better logical connection with what precedes; thus, I am a fellow-servant of thyself and also of all the old prophets. Thou, they and myself have this in common, that we are witnesses for Christ, and this witnessing involves the spirit of prophecy. They (the old prophets) testified prophetically about Christ; thou and myself are now witnessing for Christ by predicting his future glories and triumphs. Thus we are all fellow-servants, doing a common work for our common Master. I therefore take this clause to mean, not that all prophecy in the true spirit of it testifies about Christ, but that the witnessing for Christ by all the parties here contemplated had the common element of being prophetic. Hence the parties were brethren. This accounts for the logic indicated by the word “for”—“for the testimony of Jesus,” etc.

11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12. His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

13. And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

Assuming that chaps. 4-19 of this book present two great persecuting powers—Judaism, represented by Jerusalem, and Paganism, seen in old Rome—it is noticeable that the prophetic scenes close here as they began in the first seal (6: 2), with like symbols of victory for the heavenly Conqueror:—there, a white horse with his crowned rider, marching forth conquering and to conquer; here, the same white horse of victory, his rider the faithful and the true; on his head many crowns, and his name “The word of God”—the deep significance of which none save himself could fully comprehend. Comparing the two descriptions, we see that this (as it should be) is far more expanded and more magnificent. Every feature here signifies that this conquering Hero is the Great

Messiah, the Son of God, now thought of as going forth, in symbol at least, to the final and consummating conflict with his enemies. It was pre-eminently impressive that he was clad in raiment "dipped in blood," the foregoing type of which we find in Isa. 63: 1-6: "Why art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments as he that treadeth the wine-press? I have trodden the wine-press alone," etc. The last clause of v. 15 renders it the more sure that the scene pictured in Isa. 63 gives the shading to this representation: "he himself" (*i. e.*, he alone) "treadeth the wine-press," etc. Hence the vesture dipped in blood does not refer here to his own blood shed for sin, but to the blood of his enemies shed in his retributions of justice in their destruction. They are here in symbol the *vintage*, and he treads them down in the great wine-vat of God's righteous retribution.

14. And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

15. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16. And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

The armies that followed him in heaven seem clad for an ovation, not for a battle; for a grand triumphal procession rather than for a bloody campaign, or even for one hard-fought field of carnage. Indeed it does not appear that they come into the real fight at all. The sharp sword from the mouth of the Almighty Chieftain seems to do all the execution. Coupled with this we are told below that some violent force (so the Greek word "taken," v. 20, implies) seized the beast and the false prophet and hurled them headlong into the lake of fire. Thus the fighting is represented; so it is conducted, and so it terminates. But the showing sets forth that "the armies in heaven" are in heart with their conquering King, and are permitted to follow in his train in this prospective triumph over the fallen enemies of God and of the kingdom of his Son.—"The sword of his mouth," coupled with his significant name, "The word of God," must be understood to imply that his word is power—that it is his high prerogative to "speak and it is done," his expressed will seeming to execute itself in resistless power upon his foes. No conception of absolute power comes up at all to this—the sword from his mouth smiting the nations—executing his high behests of judgment and destruction with a majesty all worthy of a God, and with a sway that mortals would strive in vain to resist.—This "ruling with a rod of iron" imitates Ps. 2, where the drift of thought is essentially the same as here, the Messiah a second David, resistless in arms, subduing the nations of his foes to his scepter—As said above,

“treading the wine-press,” etc., follows the figures and the thought of Isa. 63: 1-6.—The second name is symbolic of victorious power and of his relations as sole Monarch above all the kings of the earth. The first name, “The word of God,” looks usually rather to the nature of his mission from heaven to earth—his great function as the Revealer of God to men—though in this connection it may tacitly include that marvelous power which goes with those uttered mandates denouncing judgments upon his foes.

17. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

18. That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all *men*, both free and bond, both small and great.

This is the genius of lofty poetry. It does not prosaically locate the battle-field, map out the movements of the contending armies, and number the fallen dead, but promptly assumes the fact of awful carnage, and summons the fowls of heaven (vultures, buzzards) to gather to one grand festival upon the carcasses of the slain.—In the last clause of v. 17 the improved text gives us, not “the supper of the great God,” but “the great supper of God,” the one great festival which his terrible judgments have provided— one above all the rest in vastness. The passage imitates Ezekiel 39 in the point of setting forth the vastness of the slaughter and the terrors of this retribution as measured by the masses of the dead. In poetic conception far more grand than Ezekiel's, John hears all flesh-devouring birds from under the whole heaven summoned to hold high carnival on the flesh of the slain.

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.

20. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

The beast—the imperial power of old Rome, and the kings—*i. e.*, his horns, for they specially represent the kings of the earth (17: 12-14), gather with their armies for this great and final battle against him who sat on the white horse and his army. As remarked already, they gathered for battle, but not one feature of a battle appears in this grand panorama. As usual where weak

mortals think to fight against God, they never get beyond marshaling their hosts and manifesting their good will to fight:—then all suddenly they are quenched as burnt tow. Nothing appears but mountain masses of their fallen dead, and the gathered fowls of heaven feasting upon their putrid flesh.—As said above, the beast and the false prophet are hurled living down into the lake of fire. So the vision represents it.—The first step in the exposition of this symbol is to trace it to its source. I see no reason to doubt that we find this in the doom of the fourth beast of Daniel (7: 11); “I beheld till the beast was slain and his body destroyed and *given to the burning flame,*” *i. e.*, cast into a furnace of fire—the foregoing type of which as it stands in Daniel must be found in that terrible mode of capital punishment practiced in cruel Babylon as may be seen in Dan. 3. The symbol thus traced to its historic source must be held to signify an utter destruction, inflicted under the righteous retributions of the Almighty, and bringing to a final end their power on earth to harm the people and the cause of God.—If now the question be raised here, What precisely does this mean? Is this simply an utter destruction of an empire, an organized persecuting power and a vile idolatrous priesthood; or is it the sending down to hell of the incorrigible sinners whose life is here portrayed; or is it both, and the former considered as foreshadowing the latter?—For many reasons I must adopt the latter interpretation, this being the current strain of numerous Old Testament passages which must be assumed to be present here to the prophet’s mind; *e. g.* “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Ps. 9: 17). “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness” (Prov. 14: 32). “Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7). When the Assyrian host fell, sinners in Zion were afraid, not merely of *such* a death, but of that far more fearful one beyond; for they cried—“Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with the everlasting burnings?” (Isa. 33: 14.) So also Mal. 4: 1-3.—So here the judgments sent on the wicked in this world are precursors of the wrath to come: the former are the prelude and pledge of the latter.—In Rev. 20: 10 we see the devil cast into the same lake of fire; but certainly this could not have meant that he was simply to have his worldly power broken as the imperial scepter of old Rome was broken, [his being bound with a great chain (20: 1-3) had accomplished that object]; nor that he was to suffer a violent death after the manner of wicked men; but must have meant that God would send him actually to “his own place”—the eternal prison-house of woe whither according to this showing the beast and the false prophet had already gone.—In the first clause of v. 20 the most approved reading means more than that the false prophet was taken up with the beast and both cast into the lake together. This reading inserts the Greek words for “with him” between the

article and the noun in the phrase "the false prophet"—making it "The [with him] false prophet"—a construction which the idiom of our tongue will not admit, but the sense of which may be given thus: 'The beast was seized and the *one with him*, viz., the false prophet, etc. This shows how intimately associated together the beast and the false prophet were. The latter is forcibly described as the one always with the former, his subordinate, his ever faithful servant, always ministering to his vile purposes, always seducing kings, nations and people to worship the first beast.—These were cast, not "into a lake" but into *the* lake—the well known prison-house of the lost.

21. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Remarkably while the beast and the false prophet were represented as cast bodily and violently into the lake of fire, the remnant seem to have stood the battle although they did not fight, and were slain with the sword of the warrior Chief—the Great Conqueror. See the explanation of this symbol above, in notes on vs. 14-16. —Thus closes this scene of the final destruction of the beast and of his false prophet, and also of their armies. What could more impressively show that Jesus Christ is indeed the Glorious Conqueror, "mighty to save;" and that his people, suffering however severely under bloody persecution or in the fear of its impending storm, may yet be most sure of victory for Zion in the result and at no distant day; sure also of a blissful reward if they are called to resist unto blood and to lay their lives down for Him who laid down his life for them? Such are doubtless the great moral lessons which these revelations made to the seer of Patmos sought to impress.

RESUME OF THE ARGUMENT.

The second or Roman division of this book embracing chap. 12-19 closes here. A resumé of the argument is therefore appropriate, setting forth briefly why I find Pagan Rome and not Papal in these chapters.—The reader will bear in mind that besides the great red dragon—well known as the devil and Satan—whose identity we have no need to discuss—there are here three leading personages, all persecuting enemies of God and of his people; viz. (1.) The seven-headed and ten-horned beast from the sea (13: 1-8); (2.) Another beast said to be "from the earth" (13: 11-17), bearing also the name of "the false prophet" (16: 13, and 19: 20, and 20: 10); (3.) Another personage known variously as "Babylon" and "that great city" (14: 8); "great Babylon" (16: 19); "the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters;" "mother of harlots," etc. (17: 1-9, 15, 18) and "Babylon the great" (18: 1-24). Under the construction given above, the first personage is the imperial

power of Pagan Rome. The second is the pagan priesthood, always ministering to the vital forces of paganism and doing the work, well known to the Jews, of a "false prophet." The third is the city of Ancient Rome.—Other conflicting theories find Papal Rome in the beast from the sea (No. 1); or in the beast from the land (No. 2); or in the great harlot city, the mystic Babylon (No. 3); or in the last two combined. Now the reader will bear in mind carefully that these three personages are always kept distinct from each other. The first beast, the one from the sea (13: 1), is never confounded with the second beast—he from the land (13: 11), alias "the false prophet;" nor are either of these confounded with the harlot city, Babylon. Consequently this distinction should be duly honored in our interpretation.—Again, let it be noticed that all these personages are *contemporary*. They are all upon the stage of action at one and the same time, bearing definite, positive and vital relations each to the other. The second beast always ministers to the first and of course must be on hand at the same time. It is therefore simply preposterous to make the first beast Pagan Rome and the second Papal, since all history witnesses that Pagan Rome died long before Papal Rome was born.—Again, the harlot is contemporary with them both; for she sits upon and is borne by the first beast; the ten horns of the first beast ultimately "hate the whore and make her desolate" (17: 16). These mutual and chronological relations compel us to interpret all these three personages as contemporary. Therefore if either of them is Papal Rome, they are *all* Papal Rome, and Pagan Rome is not here at all. We must not mutilate and distort history to help out a favorite theory. Pagan Rome and Papal Rome are chronologically centuries asunder, as every well informed reader will admit when he considers that these personages (the two beasts and the harlot city) are each and all here *as great persecuting powers and as nothing else*. Papal Rome was not known in history as a great persecuting power until far down into the middle ages, say the eleventh or twelfth century, one thousand years after the age of Nero, and seven or eight hundred years after the last persecutions suffered from Pagan Rome. Therefore we simply outrage both history and prophecy when we make some one or more of these three personages Pagan Rome and the rest Papal Rome.

The great question of interpretation is therefore narrowed down to this one point—*Pagan Rome versus Papal*. Are these three personages of chapters 13-19 all Pagan Rome in some of its aspects, or are they all Papal?—Let us bring this chief question to the test of the principles of interpretation which we have found applicable to this book of prophecy.

1. The Pagan Rome system *keeps within the limitations of time* which God himself has fixed for at least the main events of this book. The Papal Rome system does not, but strides on far beyond them. It is an outrage on the sense of words to say that

events seven or eight hundred or one thousand years in the future are "near at hand;" "shortly come to pass." This limitation of time admits the Pagan Rome system with perfect facility. It excludes the Papal system peremptorily.—Nor let it be objected that the final destruction of Pagan Rome was remote, for it began soon; even within one year of Nero's death three emperors had successively mounted the throne and successively fallen, and as Taylor in his history testifies, "Rome appeared on the very brink of ruin from the madness of its own citizens" (p. 268).

2. The Pagan Rome system corresponds precisely as we have seen with the interpretations and explanations given by the revealing angel himself in chap. 17, where the seven heads, alias kings, are chronologically located and almost named. It corresponds also with the identification of the number of the beast (13: 18) which is proved beyond all reasonable doubt to refer to Nero.—All these divinely given explanations equally preclude the Papal Roman theory.—Let it not be lightly esteemed that in this prophecy we have vitally important landmarks of prophetic interpretation in the form of well defined historic *dates* and *characters*. Here are the first seven kings of the Julian dynasty: the prophetic finger drops definitely on the first one—the head which received a deadly wound, but from which the beast himself recovered: the sixth also as the one then reigning is pointed out most precisely by the number of his name (13: 8): and the seventh who was to "continue but a short space"—given in history as a reign of seven months.—Yet again, the woman, the great harlot, shown (17: 18) to be "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth," *can not possibly be any other than Pagan Rome*. Her location on seven mountains (17: 9) coupled with her world-wide sway (17: 18) describe Rome precisely and describe no other city known to John or to his first readers. Moreover, her relation to the seven kings (17: 7-11) proves this beyond all rational question.—This woman [great city] is the Babylon of 14: 8, and of 16: 19, and of chap. 18. These points of identification are complete. They leave no room to doubt that the Rome here set before us is Pagan and not Papal. Such identification in history it were the extreme of unwisdom to ignore, or attempt to overrule.

3. The Pagan Rome system follows the Old Testament usage of the words "abomination," "fornication," "harlot," etc., as applied to the woman of chap. 17, giving them the sense of *Pagan idolatry*; while the Papal Rome system fails at this important point.—I am aware that whole volumes have been written to show that Papal Rome is as truly idolatrous as ever Pagan Rome was. This is one of those points that require adroit management to make it even plausible. For it should be considered that the idol systems of Western Asia and of Chaldea in the age of the old prophets are the standard and model—the central element of which was, the actual worship of ideal beings, supposed to be represented under visible images, *as really Gods*, in the place

of the One Supreme. Now it is, as I think, simply slander to say that Papal Rome purposely sets up images as Gods in the place of Jehovah. She claims that her Pope is in certain respects the vice-gerent of God; but she does not set him up *as God* and above God, as an antagonist claimant of divine homage. She has done wicked things enough, for which I have no apology to make; but let us not breach the ninth commandment for the supposed sake of truth and righteousness, to carry a point against her.—I claim, therefore, that the harlotry of “the mother of abominations” in this prophecy demands the same sort of idolatry which bears this name in the Old Testament prophecies, and therefore applies precisely to the heathenism of Pagan Rome, and not to the corruptions of Rome Papal.

4. Applying this prophecy to Pagan Rome we are fully in harmony with the obvious moral purpose of the book, viz., a strong moral impression upon its first readers—a direct and most pungent application to their very hearts, their personal experiences, their intense interest in the divine judgments *upon their own persecutors*.—But the Papal Rome theory throws the event here referred to far beyond the utmost range of their knowledge, and assumes that the prophecy must have been to them mostly unintelligible, and in so far, without force or moral value.

5. The construction of chap. 18, given above, obeys that law of interpretation which demands that we follow closely the usage of the Old Testament prophecies which are manifestly *imitated* here, *i. e.*, which were before the prophet’s mind and were the source from which his language and figures were borrowed. Following this law, I find a close analogy between old Babylon and old Tyre on the one hand, and this new mystic Babylon on the other. Under the demands of this analogy I must find here *Pagan Rome* and not *Papal*. Pagan Rome was *like* those old cities; Papal Rome is altogether unlike them.

6. Under the system adopted above, the seven vials of chap. 16 represent not a succession of dissimilar and dissociated events, but a grouping of kindred events to make one general impression, all being preliminary steps or premonitory indications of the impending doom of Pagan Rome. In this respect these vials correspond to the seals and trumpets in the former part of the book, and this construction here must stand or fall with that. In this vital feature both are in harmony with their prototypes—the horses of Zech. 1 and the horses and chariots of Zech. 6; and also with the nature of the case.

7. The system which applies these great symbols to Pagan Rome provides amply (as the true system must) for passing over by analogy from one series of events near at hand to other analogous events far on in the future. Thus from the fall of Rome in chap. 18 and from the victory and triumph of the Great Conqueror in chap. 19, we pass over to the final, complete, universal victory of Jesus Messiah over all his foes—the final triumph over Satan and all his armies. In

the same manner we applied this law of prophetic analogy in the fall of Jerusalem and Judaism at the close of chap. II. The principle has perhaps a yet broader sweep here in chap. 19 and onward, since the fall of both Jerusalem and Rome are here before the mind—the basis of a yet more conclusive and overwhelming inference that Jesus will surely triumph over every foe and come forth the supreme, all-glorious Conqueror!

8. Finally, it should be decisive in favor of the system of interpretation above presented that it keeps within the limitations of the book itself; carefully follows the landmarks of *time* and *place*; honors every historic allusion which the book itself gives; yields obedience to every legitimate principle of prophetic interpretation; seeks and finds the guiding clews to the true construction within the book itself and within the Old Testament prophecies to which this book refers and from which its symbolism is borrowed, and thus relieves the interpreter of the necessity of throwing himself upon the broad ocean of universal history to find something, somewhere, which seems to correspond with or can be made to resemble the symbols found here. The confirmation of a given prophetic interpretation by fulfilling history is in place only after a faithful use of all the legitimate principles of interpretation has really given us their just results. That is, history should not *give* us our system of interpretation; it should only *confirm* it. To ignore these principles and to launch forth in the outset upon fulfilling history to fill out some preconceived system of interpretation, is the fatal vice of interpreters of prophecy. I have sought continually to avoid this method, and to follow only those principles of interpreting prophecy which are legitimate, reasonable, impregnable. If I have succeeded, then this construction will commend itself to the confidence of all judicious critics. I may perhaps with no offence to Christian modesty say that it respectfully solicits their candid consideration.



CHAPTER XX.

New scenes open. Nothing is said to indicate how near *in time* these scenes are to those of chapters 12-19, which give us judgments on the first beast and the second, and upon the harlot city, and also the consequent joy among the holy in heaven and the anticipated triumph of King Emmanuel over all his foes. The only obvious connection of this chapter with those is logical, not chronological—a connection of *thought*, not of *time*. This immediately foregoing series of events, commencing with chapter 12, opens with bringing to view the old serpent, called the Devil and

Satan. He is shown to be the prime mover and arch instigator of all the persecutions under which the church suffers. He bears a mortal hatred toward the Zion-mother and her heaven-born Son (chap. 12); he "gives to the first beast his power, his seat and great authority" (13: 2); he perpetually plies his old vocation—a liar and a deceiver from the beginning (Jn. 8: 44, and 1 Jn. 3: 8); sending forth "unclean spirits of devils" to deceive the kings of the earth (16: 13, 14). So these chapters present him. If we can not say that he fills the foreground of the picture, we can at least see that he pulls the wires and works the machinery; his agencies underlie every movement of the hostile army arrayed against heaven's king and people. And now in this chapter he appears again, to receive his righteous doom. The beast and the false prophet have gone to their own place (19: 20); it remains only to finish in like manner the history of "the great red dragon." This chapter gives it in three distinct stages: (1.) He is bound, cast into the abyss, shut up and a great seal put upon his prison gate that he go forth to deceive the nations no more for a thousand years. (2.) Then he is loosed for a little season and resumes his old work of deceiving the nations, with the result of gathering them for one grand assault upon the beloved city to their own sudden and utter destruction. Then (3.) he is hurled down to his own place—the lake of fire and brimstone—to his destiny of woe eternal. This closes the history of this arch tempter of our race—this fell hater of God and of all goodness.—The chapter before us touches upon three other grand points in the great programme of the world's history, viz., the joy of the martyred saints during the thousand years (vs. 4-6); the deceiving of the remote nations and their mustering to the last grand assault upon the holy city (vs. 7-9); and the final judgment-scene of our race (vs. 11-15). These momentous acts in the history of our world are touched with extreme brevity, yet with words of thrilling power.

1. And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

3. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

The words, "and I saw," are in constant use to indicate a new scene in the great moving panorama. See vs. 4, 11, 12, and 21: 1, etc.—This angel had a key with which to open and also to shut the abyss, and a great chain for binding the serpent. Obviously the conception of a chain corresponds to the idea of a ser-

pent—not of a spiritual agent, “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Hence we must accept this as symbol, intended simply to give us the idea of restraint, confinement—by what precise agencies we can not know as yet—agencies, however, that are adequate to their purpose of shutting him off for a thousand years from his satanic work of deceiving men into sin and ruin.—The view given here of the agencies of Satan upon the minds of men follows that which appears throughout the preceding chapters—“deceiveth the whole world” (12: 9); “working” [pretended] “miracles” to deceive the kings of the earth and gather them to the great conflict against Almighty God (16: 13–16); the great instigator to idolatry and to bloody persecution of the saints. It is essentially the same view which the apostle has put in the words, “The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2: 2), giving prominence however to those aspects of his work which stand in the foreground in this book—idolatry and persecution.—This restraint upon Satan is limited in duration—a thousand years. The reader will not need to be told that this chapter has given us the word “*Millennium*,” which means a period of a thousand years. By “*the Millennium*” is meant precisely this period during which Satan is bound and shall not deceive the nations.—Will it be literally one thousand years, or shall it be taken as an indefinitely long period?—The evidence for deciding this question must come from two sources:—(1.) The scripture usage of this phrase; (2.) The light of other scripture concerning the duration of this period.—(1.) The phrase “a thousand years” occurs three times. The Psalmist says (90: 4), “For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past”—meaning not precisely twice five hundred, but a long, indefinite duration. Peter (2 Eps. 3: 8) has the words, “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”—which certainly must be taken in the long, indefinite sense. Solomon (in Eccl. 6: 6) has the same usage: “Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told,” etc.—I scarcely need refer to the fact that the word “thousand” is spoken of other things beside years in the same indefinite sense: “A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand;” “The cattle on a thousand hills;” “A day in thy courts is better than a thousand,” etc. The usage of scripture seems therefore to be decisive for the indefinite sense.—(2.) So also is the doctrine of prophecy in regard to the duration of this period of the ultimate prosperity and triumph of Zion. On this point we have a single passage which seems to be explicit and decisive. Isaiah (54: 7, 8) puts in contrast the period in which Zion has been afflicted and not comforted (in the large sense) with this period of her joyful prosperity; thus, “For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid myself from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I gather thee.” Here the “small moment” in which Zion has been com-

paratively, relatively, forsaken stretches through the long ages before Christ came, not to say also through the Christian centuries down to this era of the binding of Satan and the joy of the saints therein; while the *everlasting kindness*, spanning the long ages of God's mercy, are put into this thousand years. Is it then possible that these thousand years are to be cut sharply down to ten centuries? Can ten centuries suffice for the display of "*everlasting kindness*" over against six or seven thousand years of "*forsaking*," which relatively to this thousand years are only "a small moment?" Mathematically put, If six thousand years means "a small moment," how many years must be required for the manifestation of "*everlasting kindness*?"—For aught that appears it must be admitted that the everlasting kindness of God's mercy to his Zion is precisely this Millennium of John. Who shall cut it down to precisely ten hundred common years?—It ought to be added that the standard doctrine of Old Testament prophecy is firmly of this sort: "His [Messiah's] name shall endure forever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed" (Ps. 72: 17). "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." "They shall inherit the laud forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands," etc. (Isa. 60: 20, 21). See also Jer. 31: 40, and Dan. 7: 14, 27, and Mic. 4: 7. I must therefore consider it certain that this thousand years should be taken as indefinite and very long.—Other questions respecting the state of the world during this period; the prevalence of gospel light; the standard of piety; the type of Christian civilization; the longevity and general happiness of the race, will best be considered after the subsequent verses shall have come fully before us.

4. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

6. Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Note that the "thrones" are put in the foreground, the first thing seen.—*Who* are they that sit upon them? Undoubtedly

the souls of the martyrs immediately after described—the same who “reigned with Christ a thousand years.” Their exaltation and blessedness are therefore the prominent features in this scene.—“*Judgment* is given unto them;” but what judgment and in what sense? The words taken in themselves might mean and have been thought by some to mean that they are made associate judges with Christ, sitting and reigning with him in the proper literal sense.—But this view must be rejected for three reasons; (1.) The natural improbability, not to say impossibility, of their performing this function; (2.) The fact that “reigning with Christ,” as we shall soon see, has in the Scriptures a very different sense from this, viz., the sense of rejoicing in his joy, of being fully blessed and highly exalted in and with him; (3.) The very vital fact that these souls, here seen in vision, are identically the same that were seen under the altar at the opening of the fifth seal (6: 9–11), and that this scene is closely correlated to that. There the revelator hears them cry, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not *judge* and *avenge* our blood?” etc. Here he sees their prayer answered; the *judgment* they prayed for is given them. Their blood has been judged most justly and avenged most fearfully upon their guilty murderers.—The reader will note carefully that these souls according to their description must be the same as those seen “under the altar” (6: 9–11);—here “beheaded;” there “slain:” here, “for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God;” there, “for the word of God and for the witness” [“*marturian*” as here] which they held [without faltering]. The additional points here—“had not worshiped the beast,” etc., had not come up at the opening of the fifth seal, but came in at a later stage of the book and are here only to show that these martyrs include all those who suffered, whether from persecuting Jews or from persecuting Romans.—“Blessed and *holy* is he that hath part,” etc. In what sense “*holy*?” Does this mean merely that he is a good man, a saint in the common significance of this word? Or rather in the original sense of the word—one *set apart* and distinguished from all others, so that the clause means, *pre-eminently* blessed is he, distinctively above all others?—I accept the latter sense.

We may now give attention to the important points in this passage—in the following order:

1. Who are these “souls?”
2. In what sense do they “live and reign with Christ?”
3. What is meant by this “first resurrection?”
4. What moral effect was sought by this strong and striking representation of the joy of the martyrs during this thousand years?

1. *Who are these “souls?”*—As said above, the description accords so perfectly with that of the souls seen under the altar (6: 9–11) as to leave no room for doubt that these are the same. Moreover, nothing could be more natural or more appropriate than to bring them to view again here to show that their prayer is now

gloriously answered; their sorrow turned to joy; their blood most signally avenged; that the "*judgment*" they implored is given them. This book of Revelation would have been incomplete without this final view of the souls seen first under the altar.—Yet again, it is entirely in harmony with the genius of this book that the glories of the Millennium should be set forth *as seen in the joy of the martyrs and the co-ordinate joy of Christ their Lord*. Note how the glorious results of the fall of Judaism and of its representative city are shown (11: 15-18) in the songs of heaven; and in like manner, the results of the fall of Babylon, in the Alleluias that come down as the voice of many waters and the voice of mighty thunderings because "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth" (19: 1-7). The same style of poetic conception rules in this passage. We are shown the blessedness of the Millennium in the ineffable bliss and glory of the martyred saints exulting with their glorious Lord and King.

2. *In what sense do they "live and reign with Christ?"*—In my view "live" and "reign" serve to fill out one common idea. The words help to explain each other. The state here tacitly antithetic to "life"—out of which they come when they begin to live—was not non-existence, but was suffering, trial—the state of the praying and struggling martyred souls as shown (6: 9-11). And this is the common usage of the word "live," taken figuratively. "Now we *live* [*i. e.*, in real life and blessedness] if ye stand fast in the Lord" (1 Thess. 3: 8). "Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and *live*"—be richly blessed by means of our affliction yielding the peaceful fruit of righteousness? (Heb. 12: 9.) So the "eternal life" of the righteous is by no means a mere eternal existence. The tree of life is not so called because it barely prolongs existence. If this were its only significance, the devil himself and all the damned might eat of it. A little attention will show that this usage of the words "live," "life," prevails throughout the Bible and indeed in universal language.—Reigning, being a king, has been in every age one of the chief objects of man's ambition. Hence it is naturally put for what men most aspire after and most love—any supposed or real blessedness. So Paul uses it (1 Cor. 4: 8); "Now ye are full; now ye are rich; ye have *reigned as kings* without us." Observe that the glory and blessedness promised to God's people and especially made prominent during the ages of persecution in promise to those who suffer with enduring patience, is often presented as here;—"They shall be kings and priests of God and of Christ." With slight variations in the phraseology, this figurative language abounds throughout the New Testament. This book of Revelation opens with it; "Hath made us kings and priests unto God" (1: 6); and in the same words (5: 10) with the additional clause—"and we shall reign on the earth." Peter combines both ideas—king and priest—from Ex. 19: 5; "a royal priesthood," *i. e.*, kingly priests and priestly kings—an honor which

blends the distinctive qualities of both the king and the priest. But Paul (Rom. 8: 17) gives us the precise idea: "If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him that *we may be glorified together.*" The exaltation to a glory like Christ's and a glory co-ordinate with Christ's seems to be the precise idea so often presented in the Scriptures in words or at least in general thought like this before us. See also I Pet. 4: 13.—Now there is not the least occasion to strain this language so as to include the responsible functions of *king* in the universe of God. Such a sense is simply impossible because the thing itself is so. Jesus Christ is Lord alone. None other than he has the capabilities; none but he has the right: let none but him have this supreme glory.—The sense of our passage therefore is that the martyrs are ineffably blessed in their joy with Christ over the binding of Satan and the "filling of the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" [Jesus] "as the waters cover the sea." The rest of even the righteous dead come short of such a life—at least, of a life so full of blessedness at this particular time and because of these special events. None else can appreciate and drink in this joy as those martyrs do. Others will have their blessedness in its time; but the pre-eminent joy over the binding of Satan and these victories of Jesus is the lot of those only who have suffered and prayed as did those martyrs seen under the altar.—The wicked dead come not into this account.

3. *What is meant by this "first resurrection?"*—I am well aware of the difficulties that invest this question. These difficulties I feel the more deeply because I see what seem to me strong reasons in support of the figurative sense of "resurrection;" and yet so far as I know, the literal sense is adopted by most if not all of the best critics. Hence it behoves me to present my views modestly, yet none the less fully and clearly. Whether my views are well sustained let the reader judge.

The choice lies between the literal sense—the raising of the dead body to life; and the figurative, viz., joy after sorrow; the passing from agony, despondency hard by despair, into high fruition and blessedness—the change from a quasi death to real life. We may call the latter the symbolic sense of the word "resurrection."

In favor of this usage of the word here, I adduce the following considerations:—(1.) The almost universally symbolic strain of this book. Not going beyond this chapter we have symbols in the "great chain," the "old serpent," the "seal" put upon him, the "thrones," the "second death," the "camp of the saints," the "beloved city," etc., etc. It is therefore *with* and not *against* the analogy of the book to account this resurrection symbolic.

(2.) John found this symbolic usage of "resurrection" and of its idea, in the old prophets; particularly in Isa. 26: 14, 19, and Ezek. 37: 1-14, and Hos. 13: 14. [See my notes on those passages.]—The argument here is that since John follows the usage

of the Old Testament prophets almost if not quite invariably, it is fair to assume that he follows it here. Seeing their usage of this idea of resurrection, he naturally adopts it himself. This, as we have continually seen, is remarkably the law of this whole book.

(3.) Another remarkable fact deserves careful consideration. Twice in his gospel (viz., 5: 24-29, and 11: 23-26) our author touches the subject of resurrection and in both cases he has two resurrections before his mind, viz., (1) the raising of souls from death in sin to real and blessed life in God; and (2) the raising of bodies from their graves. Note the order of his thought.—“He that heareth my words and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but *is passed from death unto life*. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming and *now is* when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall *live*.” [This is the first resurrection.] The second and other is put thus: “Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth.” Beyond all question this second is the literal resurrection of the bodies of all the dead. Equally beyond question is it that the former is a spiritual resurrection; *i. e.*, the resurrection is made a figure or symbol for that more wondrous and far more glorious change which comes over human souls when they pass from death in sin to everlasting life and peace in God.—The resurrection of Lazarus gives us the other case referred to. And here too the first and leading thought is that higher, grander and more comprehensive one—“I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were *dead*, yet shall he *live*.” As the infinite fountain of all life and of all resurrection-power, I first evince it by raising dead souls to the life of peace and love and blessedness in God—even the souls of all who believe in me; and next I do the subordinate and very inferior thing of raising their mortal bodies to life. The first resurrection is the spiritual. This is the natural order in which the mind of Jesus and consequently the mind of John arranges the grand ideas connected with resurrection. Should it therefore surprise us that having followed this order in every case where he touches the resurrection in his gospel, he should follow it here also?

(4.) The strong, decisive points which set forth a literal resurrection are lacking here. Nothing is said of bodies, much less of bodies coming up out of their graves. Indeed it is quite plain that John saw no bodies but only “souls.” He uses precisely the same language here as in chap. 6: 9-11 where beyond all question the souls seen were disembodied, being in the state intermediate between death and the resurrection. Of these “souls” he does not say that they are restored to their bodies or their bodies to them; but only that they “*lived*”—lived and reigned with Christ as kings and priests—the sense of which we have already discussed. How John speaks of a real resurrection of bodies any

one may see in the closing verses of this chapter: "The dead, *small* and *great*, stand before God;" "the sea gave up the dead [bodies] that were in it," etc.

(5.) The description here compared with that in 6: 9-11 demands nothing more than this—that souls seen first in the agony of prayer and solicitude are now seen emerging from that state, or rather, fully emerged into glorious exaltation and blessedness with Christ, luxuriating in his triumphs, exulting in the fall of Satan, in the victories of Zion's King, in the peace and blessedness of men over all this wide earth, and the consummation of the divine glory in the grand scheme of salvation! Is not such a transition worthy to be called a resurrection unto life?

(6.) This view of the meaning harmonizes perfectly with the moral purpose of the whole book. This can not be said with equal pertinence of the other interpretation.—The martyred dead emerging from their agony of solicitude and prayer under the altar to ineffable joy and triumph with Christ as if on thrones of honor, would be a most impressive scene to the still imperiled and suffering saints to whom these visions were sent. Nothing could be more inspiring. How it would lift their souls from all depression and fire them with zeal for even martyrdom itself since it stands associated with such rewards!—But it is by no means clear that a literal resurrection of those martyrs in advance of all other saints could be, in itself considered, in any measure so inspiring. If you take out of these words the sense of ineffable joy and glorious exaltation, and leave only the literal idea—the raising of their bodies from their graves—have you not robbed them chiefly of their inspiring power?

(7.) A literal resurrection in this passage is opposed by the uniform testimony of all other scripture to the effect that there is but one resurrection and that one not only general but *universal*—of all the dead; not only all the righteous but all the wicked—"all that are in their graves" (John 5: 28). See this subject discussed in my "Jeremiah," pp. 406-409.—I grant that such language [of universality] may be supposed to admit slight exceptions, like that recorded in Matt. 27: 52, 53. But if this resurrection in John be that of bodies, it becomes not a slight but a great exception, so great as essentially to break down the rule. For consider how many will be embraced under it. Can we limit it to the martyrs of John's age—those who fell before the malignity of the Jews or the cruelty of Nero? If we extend it to all martyrs of all Christian ages, the number becomes a host—all too many to come in as an exception to statements so strong and so comprehensive as those which affirm one resurrection only of all the human race.

(8.) The first resurrection is correlated here, not distinctly with a second resurrection of bodies, but *with* the "*second death*." Now since this second death is certainly symbolic, *i. e.*, is not a second severing of soul from body, but simply a state full of awful terror

and indefinite anguish which no other symbol but that of death can adequately express, therefore we may naturally suppose that the first resurrection, correlated to it, is also symbolic—used in an analogous sense, of what is indefinitely blessed.—These considerations are modestly submitted as the grounds which incline me strongly to the view of a figurative as opposed to the precisely literal sense of this “first resurrection.”

4. The moral effect sought by this strong and striking presentation of the blessedness of the martyrs has been brought out incidentally during my argument, and can not fail to be readily seen. It harmonizes perfectly with the great moral purpose which pervades the whole book, viz., to inspire the utmost Christian heroism and patient endurance under the fear or the present pressure of bloody persecution.

The Millennium so far as revealed by John is now before us. The reader will see that the description is very limited, making only three leading points, viz., the binding of Satan; the duration of this restraint; and the joy of the martyrs with Christ over the glorious event. If we ask for the agencies which are to introduce and produce this millennial age, these visions give no answer beyond what is comprehended in the one fact—*Satan bound*. If we ask what John has taught us respecting the state of the world during this Millennium, we are left to infer it from these two facts—the withdrawing of Satan's influence, and the joy of the martyrs and of Jesus over the victory of his cause, the triumph of his reign.—We may however turn back to Old Testament prophecy and there find many of the most important questions fully answered. For example, if we ask for the political, moral, and religious state of the world, we learn that wars will cease; crime disappear; that hate will die out of human bosoms and love reign in its stead; the idols will utterly perish; one God only shall be worshiped and obeyed from the rising to the setting sun. If we ask, What agencies are to work this wondrous change? we are promptly answered—“For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord [Jesus] as the waters cover the sea.” The light of the gospel shall go forth to every land, shall reach every eye, and through attending grace transform every heart. Not Satan but Jesus shall reign. Satan deceives no longer; the truth of God in his gospel leads men in the paths of righteousness and peace.—These long ages form the grand theater for manifesting the transforming power of the gospel of salvation—redemption by the cross of Jesus. It is the consummation of the gospel age, in which the inherent power of God's Spirit with his truth, borne in the willing hands and loving hearts of his people, will have free course and be glorified.—Moreover, it will afford an opportunity never enjoyed before of estimating the amount of malign influence exerted by Satan upon our race to instigate crime, intensify depravity, draw men away from God to idols, and in general to withstand God and his truth and people. During

this thousand years it may be seen how much opposing force is subtracted and how much yet remains to be encountered and overcome.—But most affecting and sublime of all is the conception given us in this millennial age of the magnificent results of the gospel upon human well-being. Men will see as never before that the gospel is indeed “the power of God unto salvation”—a salvation that really *saves* from the miseries of sin. Think of the limitless sweep and range of this power; think how the blessedness of each saved soul is augmented by the known blessedness of all; think how the joyous present will be the more enjoyed for its contrast with the troubled, the sinning and the suffering past; and finally, conceive with what ineffable joy the saints will repose in the assurance of a long, long reign of truth and righteousness and peace over a world in which Satan has held sway so cruelly and so long. Will it not be joyous to know that the reign of Jesus Messiah will be indefinitely longer?

7. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

The words and figures used here are easily traced to Ezek. 38 and 39, where we have a like account of the mustering of remote northern nations; the very names, Gog and Magog; the vast number of their hosts; their vain attempt to besiege and destroy the holy city, and the fearful judgments of the Almighty which blasted their efforts and swept their hosts with fell destruction. In Ezekiel the agencies employed in their destruction are more various; here they seem concentrated in the one most terrible of all—fire from God out of heaven.—The conception of the saints as “encamped” and of “the beloved city” is altogether Jewish in its origin, for it locates the scenes in Palestine. The word “earth” [“breadth of the *earth*”] should rather be the *land*—that of the ancient Jews.—There is no occasion to infer that these events are identical with those referred to by Ezekiel. It is the usage of John throughout this book to borrow his terms and figures from the old prophets, and then describe with them events analogous but not at all the same. Judging from its place in the prophetic series, the great conflict of Ezek. 38 and 39 precedes the millennial age which stands in the closing chapters (40–48); while here in John it certainly follows the Millennium.

This account of the loosing of Satan and its results is most remarkable. I am not aware that any allusion to it appears elsewhere in the Scriptures. Indeed the tenor of all the Old Testament prophecies of the millennial age represents it as not only indefinitely long, but as stretching onward to the very end of time. At least there is no hint of an abrupt termination and a marked reverse like what appears here. The Old Testament prophets do not locate the resurrection and the final judgment as related to the millennial age, but rather seem to make the glorious blessedness of the Millennium merge into the eternal heaven. We can not however say that their testimony stands in direct collision with this. The fact is rather that their testimony is negative; this is positive. They fail to say any thing about this reverse; John definitely affirms it. It is in vain to ask why they omitted it, supposing it to be true. God did not give prophecy on the principle of revealing all truth to every prophet. We must rest on the ground that he would not have said these things to John, and through him to us, if they had not been true.—Assuming their truth, therefore, it is obvious that one part of God's design in permitting this last development of Satan in our world may have been to exhibit his agency before our race and before the moral universe with far more distinctness and prominence than ever before. After the long ages of Christ's peaceful and triumphant reign, the very name of Satan, and much more his pernicious agencies, may have been almost forgotten from the human mind, not to say from angelic minds as well. One more exhibition of satanic hate and revenge and power will not be amiss for the moral instruction of the universe. Coming at this stage, in the strongest possible contrast with the beneficent reign of the Great Messiah, it will stand out most signally before the universe as the moral ground of his eternal doom. Who can then fail to see that he is indeed a *devil* and a *Satan*, infinitely deserving his destiny of torment in the lake of fire and brimstone forever and ever!—It is noticeable that here as in Ezekiel 38 and 39 there is no intimation that the people of God joined battle with the hostile invaders. It rather seems that they "stood still to see the salvation of God"—and *not in vain!* The scene is shaped, perhaps purposely, to reveal the blazing right arm of the Almighty in judgment on his foes! It will avail little for us to define God's methods in a case like this; general views and results are all that he has been pleased to give us.

10. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.

This is his final doom.—The clause, "that deceived them," indicates his damning crime—cruelly and falsely alluring them on

to their ruin; reckless of their welfare; maliciously bent on withstanding God and his people, and upon destroying the peace of the universe to the utmost extent of his power. Oh, how richly does he deserve his doom!—The question will arise whether this “lake” is or is not the same with the abyss [abussos] translated, “the bottomless pit.”—The fact of different names almost demands a difference in the things to which the names are applied. Else how could we account for the two distinct names? Moreover, the abyss seems to be a place of duress, confinement, only or at least chiefly; but this “lake” is pointedly described as “a place of torment.” The same distinction between the present and the remotely future condition of lost angels—the legions of Satan—is elsewhere indicated:—“Into everlasting fire, *prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Mat. 25: 41); “Art thou come hither to torment us *before the time?*” (Mat. 8: 29.)—“The beast” and “the false prophet,” *i. e.*, the guilty persecutors of whom these are the representative characters, have the same destiny, as had been said before (19: 20).—The moral bearing of these great facts upon the persecuted saints of John’s age will be readily seen.

11. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

I see no reason to doubt that these verses describe the scenes of the final judgment. For aught that appears this judgment will follow closely upon the events of the verses immediately preceding.—The grandeur and majesty of this final judgment as here depicted are unrivaled. “A great *white throne*”—white being significant of purity and righteousness. No farther attempt is made to describe the face of him that sat upon it save to say that before its sublime presence, the earth and heaven *fled away* as if they could not bear it! They fled, but found no place to hide! Shall we say—They sink into annihilation before his dread majesty?—Then I saw the dead, small and great, young and old, of all time—stand before the *throne* [so the best authorities give the text, instead of before God];—“and the books were opened”—following the human conception of books of record in which the deeds of every human life have been registered against this dread day of final account!—One special book is there and is opened—“the book of life”—showing that the righteous, all redeemed souls [shall we say also unsinning infants?] have their names. And all the dead—the long succession of human generations since the world began, are judged out of those books of record, each and all

according to their works. Such also is the view given of the final judgment in various other scriptures; and such a transaction is manifestly demanded for the purpose of revealing to all the intelligent minds of the universe the righteousness of God's final decisions upon human destiny. It naturally precedes the last award of endless blessedness to the righteous; of equally endless woe to the wicked. So Christ has taught us, Mat. 25: 31-46.

13. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.

14. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

The question, Whence came these "dead?" is here answered. The sea gives up the myriads who found their graves there. In the terms, "Death" and "Hell" [Thanatos and Hades], we seem to have the King of the under-world [Thanatos] and his dominions [Hades] where the dead have been received and kept, and whence their bodies come up in this great resurrection day. It is remarkable that the "sea" should be thought of as holding a part of the dead, and the graves on land as having another part.—In v. 14 the sense seems to be that Death and Hell, personified, are destroyed. Having fulfilled their mission, they are no more. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15: 26).—The Sinaitic and Alexandrine manuscripts with which the best modern editors concur, add to this v. 14 the words, "the lake of fire."—V. 15 shows that the whole race falls into two classes only; those who are written in the book of life, and those who are not. All the latter are cast into the lake of fire. The destiny of the former is not specially spoken of here, but is given in full in the two remaining chapters.



CHAPTER XXI.

This chapter and vs. 1-5 of the next bring before us the closing scenes in the magnificent panorama of the Apocalypse. The main question of interpretation here is whether this is truly the heavenly, post-resurrection state. Does this state follow the final judgment as brought before us in vs. 11-15 of the previous chapter? I am compelled to take the affirmative by the following considerations.—(1.) The consecutive order of the visions naturally demands

it. We have had the Millennium; then the last rallying of Satan's hosts and their destruction; then the "great white throne" of final judgment with the resurrection of all the dead immediately preceding and the wicked sent to their eternal destiny following:—so that now it only remains to unfold much more in detail the eternal home and state of the righteous. That this should be given much more fully than the corresponding doom of the wicked is legitimately in harmony with the moral purpose of the whole book. There is every reason to assume that this is precisely the order of succession in these stupendous events which close up the moral history of our race as related to this earthly life and its corresponding future.—(2.) The first verse alludes definitely to the passing away of the first heaven and the first earth and indicates that these new scenes come upon the great stage of action subsequently, *i. e.*, after the old earth and heavens are gone. No rational sense can be given to this language save by assuming that we are now borne onward to the state beyond the resurrection and the final judgment. The very intent of this clause—"for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away"—must have been to locate these new scenes beyond and subsequent to those before described.—(3.) All the features of this new state as here given represent it as the consummation of final retribution for all the moral good and moral evil of our present world. The righteous are shown in their eternal reward; the wicked in theirs.—(4.) No objection lies against this view of the passage on the ground that the symbols and imagery are borrowed from things earthly—largely from Old Testament descriptions of the gospel age of the world—in general, from Jewish conceptions of the holy city as the dwelling-place of Israel's God. If any thing positive is to be said of the ultimate heavenly world it must be by the laws of the sternest necessity be put in symbolic language, and these symbols must be drawn from things with which we are familiar. Otherwise all possible illustration is precluded. All positive conceptions of heaven must be built upon our actual conceptions of things earthly. Suppose an effort to evade this necessity. For example, suppose that the words used are in the dialect of heaven and not the dialect of earth; the figures and symbols used for illustration are borrowed from the scenery of the planet Saturn and from the great facts in the history of that planet. How much wiser should any of us be for such a revelation?—I have said, "all *positive* conceptions of heaven," for my argument does not look specially to those negative conceptions of the heavenly state which the Scriptures readily give us. It is easy to say of heaven—"No night there;" no tears there; no sorrow there; no sin there; nothing whatsoever that worketh abomination or maketh a lie: "no more sea," etc. Such negations of the ills of our present state come home at once to our souls, impressed by our bitter experience of life's conflicts and woes, of its griefs and tears; and we feel that by these points of the description, we have

learned something definite about heaven. And we have. But heaven is more than a system of negations. It is more than earth with these ills of earth taken out. Hence we naturally long to know something beyond these negative points. The symbolism of this chapter is an effort to teach us something more—an effort which by the demands of a stringent necessity seeks to build up a positive heaven upon the illustrations afforded us in the scriptural views of the earthly Zion. The point of my argument here is that this resort to the earthly Zion for symbols and illustrations with which to lift our thought to the heavenly world ought not to prejudice or in any way damage our doctrine that these scenes do set forth the real heaven that lies beyond the final judgment.—The thoughtful reader will notice that this argument has become incidentally (and I may say unintentionally) an exegesis of the chapter, giving in the main the clew to its just interpretation.

1. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

The "heavens" here spoken of, both the "first" which passed away and the "new" which comes into its place, should obviously be interpreted of the lower, the visible heavens, and not of the higher one, the glory of which is the central throne of the Infinite God. There is no reason for supposing that this higher heaven "fled away" before the presence of him who sat on the great white throne of judgment (20: 11). The lower and mundane heaven and this only can be thought of in these passages.—The phrase—"new heaven and new earth"—comes by imitation or allusion from Isa. 51: 16, and 65: 17-25, and 66: 22. There they represent the beneficent moral changes wrought in our world by the gospel, with special reference to the gospel millennial age, as the reader will see by careful attention to those passages in their connection. See my Notes upon them. But here these terms are transferred to the new order of things and to the new worlds that spring into being or order after the final judgment. This new heaven and new earth bear a sense compared with that in Isaiah, higher by far, yet analogous. I see no necessity for holding the words to precisely the same ideas, *i. e.*, to represent here the millennial rather than the post-resurrection state.—"No more sea." In some of its aspects the sea symbolizes things sublime, vast, and grand; but in the more common Hebrew usage, whatever is agitated, changeful, full of unrest, with often a strong moral shading of the guilty rebellion and unrest of sin. Recurring to the symbolism of this book, we may well notice that the seven-headed, ten-horned beast (13: 1) "rose up out of the sea." Hence the passage before us suggests the grateful assurance that in this new heavenly state there shall be no more *such* sea—the home of dragons and of savage terrible beasts.—Farther back, in the visions shown to Daniel (7: 2, 3) "the four winds of heaven

strove upon the great sea, and four great beasts came up from the sea," etc.; and in yet more ancient times the sea was a symbol of ungoverned self-will, recklessly working ruin and demanding to be firmly curbed in; for Job (7: 12) asks—"Am I a sea or a whale that thou settest a watch over me?" Isaiah (51: 20) makes fit and forcible use of this symbol: "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it can not rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;" and Luke (21: 25) draws a vivid picture of the distress of guilty nations, trembling under the impending judgments of the Almighty, in the words—"the sea and the waves roaring." With these symbols before us we may readily understand why in this new heaven and earth "there shall be no more sea."

2. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

This grand conception—a vast city let down from the highest heaven—should be thought of as ideal rather than actual—a thing of symbol rather than of reality. Jerusalem—a name dear above all other names to the ancient saints—dear because it was the city where God dwelt with his people and where all the hallowed associations of his presence and worship clustered together, became the fitting symbol for the new heavenly state. Remarkably it appears here in forms of perfect beauty; even as the bride adorned for her husband in the holy scenes of marriage. This comparison appears again (vs. 9, 10)—the city in its virgin attire, arrayed for that one hour most eventful of her life, where taste, adornment, and beauty are more in place than ever elsewhere. The reader will notice that this conception is essentially the same which we have in the Song of Solomon and which appears in various forms throughout the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament writers—the church washed from her sins, clothed in white, her loving heart given in virgin simplicity and purity to her glorious Husband, her Jesus—at once both Lover, Lord, and King. This symbol fitly gives us the grand consummation of the heavenly state. What could present it more beautifully or more appropriately?—In this verse the most ancient manuscripts omit the word "John."

3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Of course the figure, "tabernacle of God," comes from Jewish history—the holy tent in which God dwelt among men in his vis-

ible glory. Here it witnesses to us that the glory and blessedness of the future heavenly world are in the manifestations of God's presence with his people. Nearer to them than ever before, manifesting his presence and his love in modes and forms which our low earthly thought can by no means reach, he does however show that the chief element which makes that state a pure and perfect heaven is precisely this—that God is so perfectly *with his people*, so truly and gloriously *their God*. And such a God! So great, so good, so kind to them, so glorious in every manifestation! What is said here is remarkably personal in its bearings upon his people—"shall wipe away every tear;" shall cause that there be no more death or pain;—all those "former things" that made this lower world so full of trial and sadness, passed forever away!—In the first clause of v. 3 the better reading gives us "out of the throne" instead of "out of heaven." In sense this correction makes the idea more specific. The voice comes not merely from heaven in general, but from its infinite throne, *i. e.*, from the very lips of him who sat thereon.

5. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

Probation and mortality impressed themselves upon the former world and shaped every feature of the divine administration—every element in the character of the state itself. In this new world probation gives place to retribution and "this mortal puts on immortality." Therefore naturally all things become new. Will it not be a wondrous change?—Pausing in the process of the vision as if to impress more deeply this great fact of a momentous change from this state to that, he said to the revelator, Write; for here are great truths; "these words are faithful and true;" most reliable and full of thrilling significance.—The improved reading gives the last two words in this order—"faithful and true."

6. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

This emphatic, "*It is done!*" appears (16: 17) as spoken by a great voice from the temple of heaven when the seventh angel sounded and great Babylon fell! Its essential thought is *consummation*—the finishing of the grand drama of earth, the rounding up to completion of the great scheme of human salvation.—In the middle and last clauses of the verse the relation of the ideas is signally beautiful. I am the Great Author and the Great Finisher of this scheme of salvation; and the central feature of the whole scheme is this—*The water of life free to every thirsty soul!* To all who will be blessed, blessings beyond measure rich and glorious!

7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

The reading which stands in the English margin is now generally accepted on the credit of the best manuscripts; not "all things" but *these things*—the things now under consideration.—The last clause is expressive beyond all other language possible: "I will be a God to him; he shall be a son to me." What could creature ask more or better of his glorious Creator?

8. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

The blessedness of such sonship is shown yet more forcibly in its contrast with the doom of the ungodly; therefore once and once only in this chapter our minds are directed to the case of those who *would not have* the waters of life and *would not be* the dutiful sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.—The specifications here come naturally from the types of wickedness then most common and patent in the circumstances of the times. The "fearful" who shrink before the dangers of persecution and deny their Lord; the "unbelieving" who had no faith in God or in his word; the "abominable" whose vices had made them loathsome to God and to all the good; "murderers," probably with allusion to the persecutors of the saints; "whoremongers," under the moral pollutions incident to idol worship and an idolatrous age; "sorcerers," playing into the devil's hands and doing his work; "idolators," disowning the true God, and setting up false gods; and "all liars," co-operating with the father of lies in deceiving men away from the true God, into all wickedness;—these and such as these, loving sin and pollution and committing themselves to utter rebellion against the true God—shall have their part in the lake of fire—the second death.

9. And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

From this point one of the chief revealing angels proceeds to give a more minute and full view of the new and glorious city.—It will be noticed that this bride, the Lamb's wife, is identically the great city, symbolic of the future heavenly state. See note on v. 2.

10. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

11. Having the glory of God: and her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

12. And had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

13. On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

14. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The best authorities for the text give, instead of "that great city, the holy Jerusalem," only this—"The holy city Jerusalem." In v. 14 the word "twelve" is added before "names," thus; "and in them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."—Of this "great and high mountain," it were inept to ask where it stood, as if we were forgetting that this is vision and not reality. It would be of little avail also to inquire where the "holy city" rested and had its location after it came down out of heaven. It is well for us that God has made no attempt to teach us celestial geography to the extent of locating the future heaven. Better far that he should teach us (as he does) what heaven is; what makes its blessedness; and who shall have welcome entrance there.—The first descriptive point is comprehensive and expressive—"having the glory of God." The manifestations of his presence constitute both its visible splendor and its essential blessedness to his people.—"And her light" ["phōster"] "was like a most precious stone." This word "light" can not be the *state* opposed to darkness; nor has it precisely the sense of luster, effulgence, as one might suppose from its being compared with a precious stone; but (as the Greek word demands) it has the sense of *luminary*, of the source of heaven's light—its *sun*. This flamed and shone like a jasper stone, all refulgent and most beautiful.—That the twelve tribes of Israel figure so prominently in this description does honor to the place they filled in the ancient church. So of the twelve names of the twelve apostles. Their labors helped to lay the foundations of the Christian church amid immense labors and sufferings.

15. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

16. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

17. And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

In v. 15 the best textual authorities add the words "for a measure," thus: "had *for a measure* a golden reed," etc.—The passage imitates Ezek. 40: 1, and also Zech. 2: 1. The same thing appeared Rev. 11: 1. The process of measuring it before the eyes of John would give him a more impressive sense of its vastness and glory.—The perfect symmetry is a special point. Remarkably the *height* of its walls is the same as their length and their breadth. This gives the impression not only of perfect symmetry but of unsurpassed magnificence—the obvious purpose of this representation.

18. And the building of the wall of it was *of* jasper: and the city *was* pure gold, like unto clear glass.

19. And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

20. The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

21. And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

All the resources of things splendid, beautiful, rare and costly, seem to be drawn upon and exhausted in this description of the heavenly city. As in the building age of Solomon, silver was of small account and gold was every-where, so here the city was pure gold and even the streets of the city.—This word "streets" means however not merely the traveled roads, but the *broad places*—the public squares and grounds not covered with buildings.—Of the reality which corresponds with this wealth of imagery, what can we know as yet? In general we are taught that Jesus whose are the wealth and the glory of the universe will spare no cost in fitting up the mansions of heaven for his eternal abode with his redeemed people.

22. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

23. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

That no temple is there shows that it rises high above the earthly Jerusalem in which the temple was the pre-eminent glory. That it needs not the sun or the moon for its light testifies in like manner that its glory far transcends the glory of earth. It is every thing to that world that God and the Lamb are there!—are there in such revelations of their glory and in such relations to their redeemed sons and daughters as language and symbols strive in vain to set forth.

24. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.

25. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

26. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.

The more approved reading of the text omits—"of them which are saved," giving us only—"The nations shall walk in the light of it"—in language imitating the prophetic portrayal of millennial times, *e. g.*, Isa. 2: 3, "Many people [nations] shall go and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord," . . . "we will walk in his paths," etc. That "the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it" imitates the thought of Isa. 60: 11. "Thy gates shall be open continually that men may bring unto thee the wealth of the Gentiles," etc.—The shutting of city gates by night signifies more or less of danger—the possibility of a night assault or of some undesirable intruder. But here we have magnificent gates, yet no danger—no need of their being even shut! "No night there!"

27. And there shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The better authorities for the text give us, instead of "defileth" [*koinoun*] the word for common [*koinon*] in the sense of *unclean*. The meaning of the passage is not materially affected by the change. No impure thing is there. The men of impure heart and life have no place in that city. Only the ransomed, only those whose religion has made them personally holy, heartily true to God, wholly his by loving and absolute consecration, submission, trust, worship—such only are there. On no other point are these revelations of the great eternal future more positive and decisive than in this—the stringent separation of all human souls into two great comprehensive classes according to character, and the gathering of all the pure and holy into the one place, the heavenly city; but all the impure and unsanctified into the lake of fire.

CHAPTER XXII.

The first five verses close the description of the New Jerusalem. According to all principles of propriety they should have been included in chap. 21 —The remainder of this chapter pertains to the conclusion of the whole book.

1. And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner* of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.

The best manuscripts omit the word "pure" before "river." — This river imitates that of Ezek. 47: 1-12. The latter however comes forth from under the temple and really represents gospel blessings in the great millennial age, while this comes out from under the throne of God and the Lamb, representing in a corresponding manner the blessedness of the eternal heaven. — While in this New Jerusalem there is no more "sea"—that being a symbol of whatever is agitating, uncertain, tempestuous; there is a *river*, a precious oriental symbol of blessings forever flowing, naturally insuring perennial verdure, trees and shade unailing, and exemption from thirst and barrenness—the sore evils of oriental tropical regions. — This tree of life and its various fruits come also from Ezek. 47 (see v. 12) where obviously we have the plural, "trees." So also here, there must be trees and not merely one tree, for if only one, how could it be on both sides of the river? The writer speaks of the tree of life there just as we would say of any given district—The palm-tree is there, or the pine, or the cedar—meaning that this variety of tree abounds there. The meaning seems to be that these trees lined either bank of the river between it and the streets which also ran parallel on each side—a scene of superlative beauty. — This "tree of life" as well as that of Ezekiel have their prototype in the primitive garden.

3. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

4. And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.

5. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

“No more curse” appears in its thought in Zech. 14: 11; our received version being, “no more utter destruction.” The sense is—No more visitations of divine displeasure; nothing that brings calamity or any physical evil.—The fact that God and the Lamb are there has been repeatedly implied; that their *throne* is there is the new point made here, heightening the glory of this heavenly world since it shows that this is no secondary heaven, fitted up as some have supposed in the new earth, *i. e.*, in this world regenerated by fire, while the heaven of God’s throne is still elsewhere and indefinitely higher and more glorious. Utterly unlike that system of things, this description associates the redeemed most closely and intimately, even in the locality of their residence, with the throne itself of God and of the Lamb.—“His [the Lamb’s] servants shall serve him”—precisely how and in what sort of service is not said. That he has work for them to do in the great scheme of the last all-comprehensive economy of the universe, there can be no rational doubt. Is it not hinted at in the expressive words, “Ye are my witnesses?” If the “angels desire to look into these things” (of redemption) even now, may not the same angels desire to learn yet more; and the new-born angelic beings whom God may create in the ages to come—why should not they have something to learn which none in the created universe know so well as the redeemed themselves? A range of possible, nay probable, *service* opening in this line so widely and so gloriously, tempts me to follow it out and say—The gospel scheme has made stupendous and transcendent manifestations of God, both in the line of his mercy and of his justice; that these manifestations have in them a glorious moral power of priceless value for all the created minds of the universe—a power which the universe can not afford to lose—a power which the throne and moral government of God (speaking reverently) can not afford to lose or to let pass into forgetfulness, or in any way fall short of their utmost possible efficiency upon the universe of intelligent minds. Hence a demand upon his redeemed servants for *service*, long as the ages roll on—wide as the universe of intelligent beings. Who knows but this service—witnessing to such facts concerning God and the Lamb as they have in their rich experience, may be not only a joy but a positive moral power unto fresh love and adoration; a positive invigoration to their obedient life; a positive safeguard against ever falling before temptation’s power—to the myriads whom God will duly create to people the yet empty worlds hung out in our sky and the yet unborn worlds which his creative hand may bring into being when the moral appliances are in readiness to make their existence a sure as well as a priceless blessing? For myself I can not regard these suppositions as either idle or irrational speculations. It would be easy to adduce many things from the Scriptures and, most of all, from the words of Jesus himself that bear strongly in support of these general views of the future responsibilities and services of those who have

been "faithful over a few things" here. That the redeemed have service to render in behalf of their glorious Lord is one of the best things revealed of heaven. How could they endure a state in which they could do nothing to purpose to express their love and their gratitude to Him to whom they owe so much! As here this love and gratitude are best expressed by service which blesses others, which brings other souls to Jesus' feet; so there some form of service which goes out benevolently to bless others according to the well known heart of the loving Master, must be the perfection of the heavenly life. Let us thank his name beforehand for the prospect thereof!—"And they shall see his face." This indicates the most intimate and perfect knowledge—the most precious intimacy. They are not dwelling in the remote distance, too far away to see his loving eye, or to hear his inspiring voice, or to feel the very breath of his love; but they "see his face" as we see the face of a dear friend and find therein the fullest manifestations of love and sympathy possible in our present existence. Of course this symbol comes from our earthly experience. How can we expect this thought to be expressed otherwise?—Essentially the same sentiment appears in John's first epistle (3 : 2): "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." This gives us both the precious fact, and the most blessed moral result thereof in our heavenly culture.—"His name shall be in their foreheads"—the perpetual testimony that they are his. This refers tacitly to the case of the wicked persecutors who bore "the mark of the beast" in their foreheads and in their hands.—"They shall reign forever and ever"—as to which see my notes on 20 : 4.

6. And he said unto me, These sayings *are* faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

7. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

Remarkably this book closes, repeating many of the same points which appear in the introduction.—The older and better manuscripts give us, instead of "The Lord God of the holy prophets," this: "The Lord God *of the spirits* of the prophets," *i. e.*, he who controlled their prophetic communications; who gave them their messages as he now sent them by his angels. That God sent these messages, that he sent them by his angel, that they predicted events soon to transpire, were points that appear prominently in the introduction of the book. So too is the promise of blessings to those who *keep, i. e.*, who remember, study and live upon the things herein said. The book had a definite and precious moral purpose, as I have often had occasion to repeat.—"Behold, I come quickly"—to visit these threatened judgments upon Jerusalem and upon Rome—to make the revelations of my

justice and of my power which are vital to the proper setting up of my kingdom among men. (See notes on 1: 7, and 3: 11.)

8. And I John saw these things, and heard *them*. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

9. Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it not*: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

The original makes the first clause somewhat emphatic, thus: "It was I John who was hearing and seeing these things;" or thus: "I John was the one who was hearing and seeing," etc.—In regard to this offered worship and the reply of the angel, see 19: 10 and notes there. It should be specially noted that the Greek does not say or necessarily imply that this revealing angel represents himself as one of the prophets. What the Greek says is precisely this: "I am a fellow-servant of thyself and of thy brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book." I am only a servant—not, as you may have supposed, the very Master himself. I am doing a work common to the angels and to the prophets, viz., the revealing of future events from the Great God of the prophets.—On the question whether this revealing angel was the spirit of one of the old prophets, or one of those beings known in the scriptures as angels—"ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1: 14)—the utmost that can be said on this passage is that this language admits (perhaps equally well) either construction; but the analogy of the whole book goes solid for the opinion that this is one of the sinless angels. The term "angel" is used in this book outside of this passage scores of times—always in this special sense, a *supra-mundane* being, and never in any other.

10. And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

Seal not these things—*i. e.*, for future generations only to read; do not lay them over in safe keeping for the ages to come as words of no particular account to the men of your own times; for their fulfillment is close at hand. The vital and personal interest of these words is for the churches of Asia, now under the fires of persecution. Let them know that God hears their cries and sees their tears, and is almost ready to avenge their blood upon their guilty persecutors.—The injunction *not* to seal is a tacit allusion to the opposite direction given to Daniel (Dan. 8: 26, and 12: 4, 9), the words of whose prophecy referred to events onward into the times of the Syrian wars in the age of the Maccabees, some three hundred and sixty years distant. But the things foretold through

John were not remote compared with those spoken through Daniel and measured by that standard, but were near at hand—a fact which peremptorily sets aside all those systems of interpretation which spread the staple events of John's prophecies over the whole range of the Christian age down to the Millennium.

11. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

12. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

The closest rendering of v. 11 which the genius of our language allows will be of this sort: "Let the unjust doer still act unjustly; let the filthy live filthily still; let the righteous man still practice righteousness, and the holy still live holily." The words are here at all because the author thinks of the moral effects, possible or actual, of the revelations he has made upon the men whose destiny they reveal. If the wicked persecutors and the filthy idolaters still repel every warning and persist in their iniquity, let them go on—to their destruction. So also let the righteous hold on steadfastly in their righteousness despite of persecution unto blood; *for the retribution of both parties is close at hand.* "I come quickly," I bring my reward for both friend and foe—"to every man as his work shall be."—Perhaps the passage has a shade of bearing of this sort:—*Although the wicked should persist in their persecutions and abominations despite of these fearful warnings, yet let not the righteous be dismayed or be tempted to apostasy, but let them still abide in their integrity and wait for the hour of swift retribution—so near at hand!*—The passage has been supposed by some to teach that death fixes the character and therefore the destiny of all men, bad or good, unchangeably. All I feel authorized to say as to the bearing of our passage upon this doctrine is that it seems to *assume* that the wicked men here thought of (the persecutors and idolaters who figure prominently in this book) will persist in their iniquity and therefore will meet their just doom. But the precise point *asserted* and the argument made must be construed as above—the demands of the context requiring this construction.—The "coming" contemplated in v. 12 is manifestly the retribution predicted in this book upon corrupt Judaism and idolatrous Paganism—both of which at the date of this book were historically near.

13. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

The most reliable manuscripts reverse the order of the last two clauses, reading thus:—"The first and the last; the beginning

and the end"—a change which does not essentially affect the sense.—The sentiment of these words becomes specially emphatic by their relation in these closing paragraphs. The Great Messiah, Creator of all worlds, the Author and Finisher of human salvation, seems to rise before us in the majesty of his being and of his glorious works to utter these last words of promise, denunciation and warning.

14. Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

15. For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

Remarkably the Sinaitic and Alexandrine manuscripts give us, "washed their robes," instead of "do his commandments." "Blessed are they who have washed their robes," etc., with probable allusion to 7: 14: "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and to 1: 5: "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." It is not easy to account for such diversity in the manuscripts. The transcriber may have had in mind other kindred passages, and may have written from the thought in his mind rather than from the copy before him. In this case either reading is germane to the context and true to fact.—All such have right to the tree of life from which sinners, as Adam and Eve in Paradise, are excluded.—Without the city, howling like the undomesticated dogs around oriental cities, are men lost to virtue, useless to their race, accursed of God and of all the good; "sorcerers"—always denounced in the Scriptures; "whoremongers"—all the sensual, corrupt, debased, etc.—See a similar catalogue of the various classes of the wicked, in 21: 8, and the notes there. The doctrine of the passage is that broad and evermore true one—*None are shut out from heaven save those who are unfit to enter; none sent down to hell save those whose spirit is of hell, whose hearts are base, who have made themselves only the more selfish and hardened under all the influences of this world of mercy.*

16. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star.

The precise sentiment with which the book opens reappears here near its close: "I Jesus have sent mine angel," etc.—The "root of David," follows the Hebrew usage of Isa. 11: 1, and Rom. 15: 12—the root-shoot—a growth from the root, equivalent to "offspring." This identifies the speaker as the very Messiah of ancient promise; the very Personage whose gospel work and

triumphs stand out so conspicuously in that eleventh chapter of Isaiah from which the term "root of David" came.—The designation, "Morning Star," is specially pertinent in such a connection—the harbinger of glorious day; the promise and prophecy of light and glory to this world, otherwise all desolate!

17. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

The tone of this verse considered in view of its place amid the scenes of this book is wonderfully rich and impressive. Think of the real author's standpoint and of the grand objects that lie within his range and ours. The "river of the water of life" is flowing before the eye; the joys of the redeemed have come down in their voices of song and alleluias of praise and triumph. Over against these there have been visions of the lost; the smoke of their torment arising forever and ever; the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone opening its horrid jaws to engulf for evermore the filthy, the abominable, whoremongers, idolaters; and not least, we have the grand issue of the great moral conflict of earth—victory for Zion and magnificent success to the gospel in subduing the world to Jesus—all significant of the grand truth that "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," and Satan be not only foiled but infinitely cursed for his antagonism to God and goodness, and all his followers with him. And now all these sublime realities standing embodied before us in speaking symbols, the voice of the inditing Spirit is heard—"Here is salvation for lost men: Come to these waters of life!" The "bride"—as if conscious of her high destiny and thrilled with the glory of her marriage union with the Lamb—lifts up her voice and cries, *Come!* And that the call may never lack voices to utter it and to send its summons round the globe, let him that heareth say, *Come!* And lest some sad, consciously guilty, despairing soul should say—"That invitation can not mean me"—it is added, Let him that is athirst, *come!* Last of all, to give the call the broadest possible scope, it is proclaimed, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely!" Provided for all; offered to all; welcome to all;—none shall fail but those who rule themselves out—none save those who dash the brimming cup from their own lips; none but those who hate Jesus and love death!

18. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

19. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part

out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

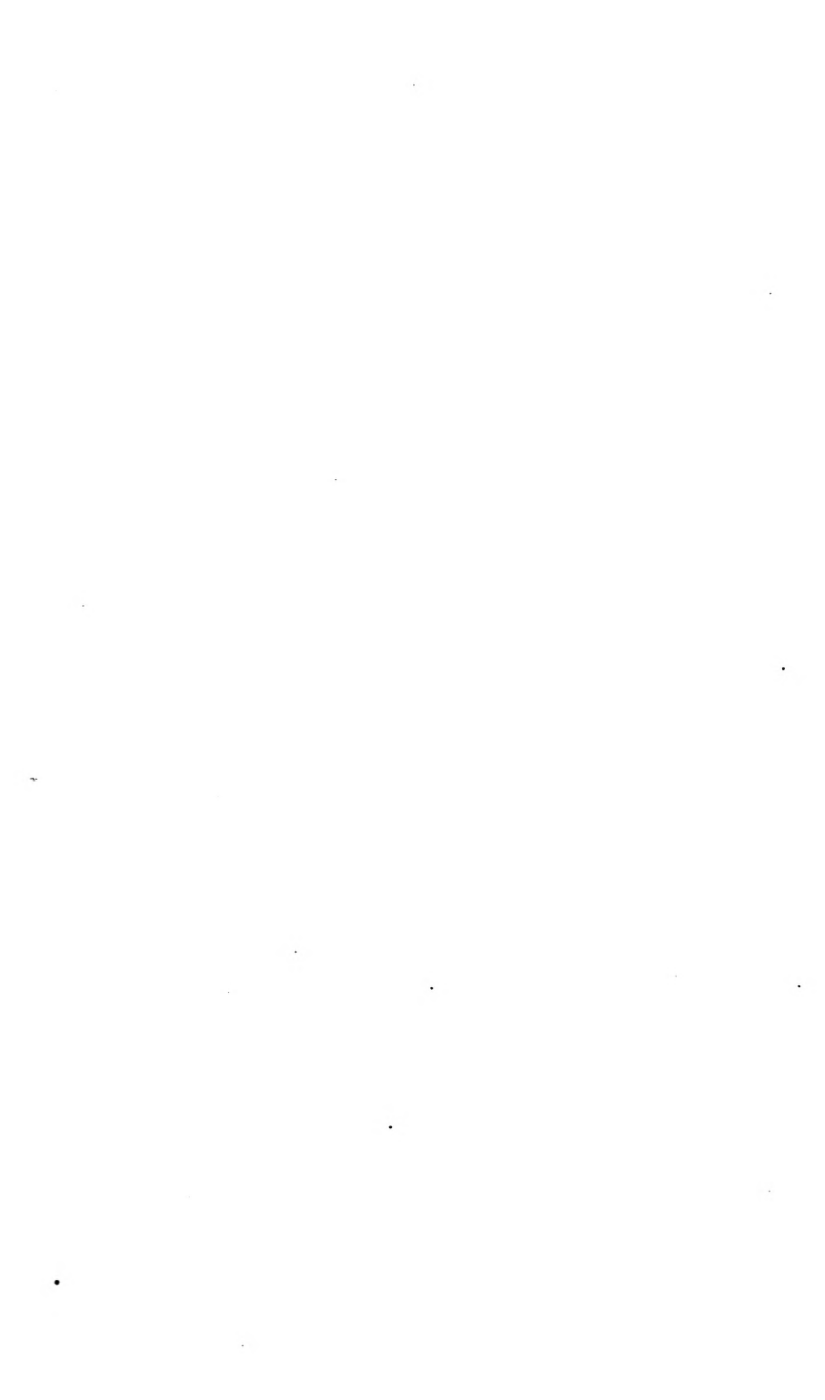
Fitly and most solemnly the book closes with admonitions against either adding or taking from the things herein written. Let them stand as the very words of God! Let them stand undiluted, unimpaired, unmodified; for how should man be wise above God! How should he dare to tone down the fearful threatenings of this book, or shift their application from the sinner of whom God has spoken?—While these visions thus apply in their full force to all intentional or careless change in these words either by adding or by subtracting, they have also a subordinate application to misconstructions and misinterpretations through prejudice or lack of diligent attention to the legitimate principles of prophetic language. Most solemnly should all those who preach from this book and all who profess to expound it give heed to these admonitions. May the spirit of truth impress on all his servants a supreme regard for the integrity of these words and a solemn and wholesome fear of changing their significance to make them mean either more or less than what God has said and intended!—The textual corrections in these verses, suggested by the best authorities, are not of vital moment. In v. 18, instead of "Add unto these things," read "Add unto *them*"—*i. e.*, the words above spoken of. In v. 19, instead of "book of life," they have "*tree* of life."

20. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

The best authorities modify the text of this verse so that it reads in this simple way—"He that testifieth these things saith, Verily I come quickly." [The prophet answers] "Amen; come Lord Jesus." Thus his full heart responds to the welcome assurance that the coming of the Lord Jesus in retribution upon both saint and sinner—the two great parties who appear in antagonism throughout this book—was then near at hand.

21. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

In the best authorities the apostolic benediction takes this simple form: "The grace of the Lord Jesus *be* with all."—Thus this peerless book closes. Long have its sublime utterances and its grand predictions thrilled the hearts of men: more and more, as its true significance is more correctly evolved, may it be an effective power toward that great consummation of victory to Zion and her King which its symbols so magnificently foreshow.



DISSERTATION I.

ON THE THEORY THAT "DAY," IN PROPHECY, MEANS "YEAR."

Does the word "day" in prophecy mean a year?—And on the same principle, must other periods of time, *e. g.*, months and years, be multiplied by three hundred and sixty to get the real time intended?—This is our question.—Technically and in short, this is often called the "day-for-a-year-theory;" but it is supposed to apply not only to the usage of the word for day, but equally to the word for month and at least to the word "time," which Daniel uses for a year. So that the broad principle is that prophetic notations of time must be multiplied by three hundred and sixty to get the real historic duration.—I am compelled to discard this theory as utterly baseless, false, and of course mischievous and delusive; for the following reasons:—1. All reasonable presumption is utterly against it. For prophecy comes from God to men in the common language of men. If it did not, it would reveal nothing, without a special revelation to explain it—a new revelation to teach the meaning of the new prophetic language. Symbols in prophecy are no exception. For in the statements made respecting these symbols, words are used in their well-known sense. The word "lion" means a lion, and the word "bear" means a bear. When a lion is seen in vision as a symbol, we fall back upon the known qualities of the lion and his known relations to other animals to find the significance of the symbol. But this is in no way peculiar to prophecy. We should do just the same in poetry, or in common conversation. So that symbols in prophecy are no exception to the common law that prophecy comes to us in merely human language, using its words in their established and well-known sense. Hence the presumption is entirely against this theory of day for year. If God speaks to men, the presumption is wholly in favor of his using the common language of men in its usual sense. The Hebrews had suitable words for both day and year, and they used them as correctly as we do ours. If God had occasion to speak to them of time in the future, why should he not use their language as they did?—2. No reason lying in the nature or objects of prophecy affords the least presumption in favor of this theory.—The only reason which I have ever heard of, or seen, assigned for this usage of day for year, is that God meant to make

his statements as to time unintelligible until their fulfillment. That is, he meant to lock up this part of the truth and hide the key.— I reply, 1. There is no evidence that God has intended or tried to hide what he seemed to reveal. There is no evidence of his resorting to enigma lest prophecy should be understood too soon. It does not appear that he has been specially careful to hide the point of duration *while professing to reveal it*. When he chooses not to reveal the *time* of events, he manifestly forbears to give it; this is all-sufficient for that purpose. What would be gained by putting his revelations in the form of a puzzle or riddle? Not to say here that this would seem to be beneath the dignity of the great God, I still press this question; Why should the Lord thus tantalize his people and mock their desire to understand what he has said in prophecy as to the time of predicted events? Where the Lord sees fit to say nothing about the time, we bow to his wisdom. Where he has spoken of the time, why may we not try to understand what he says; and further, why should we not assume that he has revealed these notations of time *to be studied and understood* and *not* to puzzle and confound the honest inquirer? Yet further: the notion that God meant to put things in such a shape that the real time should come to light only after the event, and only by means of the event, is utterly without support; for there is no *prophecy* in that; it *foretells* nothing about the time; of itself it means nothing; and no good reason can be given why God should in this way profess to communicate prophecy and yet communicate nothing!

2. If this precise plan of day for year had been adopted, a few well-authenticated facts would have brought the key to light, and would have effectually frustrated the object of concealment. For, after the key is found, it is a very simple matter to use it. Nothing can be more simple or more certain in its results than a process of multiplication in pure mathematics. Multiplying a given period of time by three hundred and sixty is soon done and done surely.—The appearance of artifice in this scheme seems to me beneath the dignity of the great and holy God. It is altogether out of harmony with the rest of the Bible. All else is lucid, honest, and manifestly said in order to be understood by the docile, humble, diligent reader.—Nor let it be thought that the case of our Lord's speaking to the Jews in parables, and explaining them only to his disciples, refutes my position. For that was judicial—a judgment sent on self-hardened and self-blinded sinners because of their chosen blindness. But this prophetic theory, if true, would be a judgment on *good men* who love the truth, and who honestly wish to learn all that God has been pleased to reveal.

3. This theory is entirely without foundation. It has no legitimate evidence for its support. It is a castle built in the air.—There is not a single case of prophetic time, in which the fulfillment has verified this principle of multiplying the prophetic time by three hundred and sixty to get the actual time. It is thought there are some events yet future—almost ready to come—which

will be in point and will prove it to every body's satisfaction; but they have not come yet!—On the contrary there are numerous cases of prophetic time already fulfilled which prove that designations of time in prophecy mean what they say, and are to be taken in their usual sense.—These statements should be carefully considered and well supported. Let us have patience to examine in sufficient detail the alleged evidence that a prophetic day means year.—(1.) Appeal is made to Num. 14: 33, 34; “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.”—Is this a case of the word day used for year? or of the word day used for only one three hundred and sixtieth part of the time really meant? By no means. Nothing of the sort. Throughout this passage, the word day means a common day,—nothing more. The word year needs no multiplying by three hundred and sixty to find the time intended.—The only *prophecy* in this passage—here in the form of a denunciation, or threatened punishment—is, “Ye shall wander forty years.” But does this mean, Ye shall wander in the wilderness three hundred and sixty times forty years; *i. e.*, fourteen thousand and four hundred years? Who can believe that? If God had said, “Ye shall wander forty *days*,” and the event had proved that he truly meant forty years, using the word day to mean year, the case would have been in point. But he did not say that, and no good reason can be assigned why he should have said it.—Will the reader still ask, Does not the Lord say, “Each day for a year?” and is not that precisely what we claim?—I answer; Those are the words he uses, but their meaning is nothing like what you claim. He means only that the years of their wandering shall correspond to the days of their searching the land through their committee, the twelve spies. The one purpose of the Lord in this form of threatening was to make their punishment a perpetual reminder of their sin—a thing which he often does for the best of moral reasons. All through their weary wanderings, they could say; “Forty days our brethren searched out the land, and brought back that unbelieving report; we heard it, and, indorsing all its unbelief, we practically said, Save us from going there! The Lord gave us our prayer in judgment, and we have forty years before us in this dreary wilderness!” This is all.

(2.) Another proof text very analagous to the preceding is Ezek. 4: 4-6. Ezekiel is commanded to lie on his right side forty days and on his left three hundred and ninety days, before all Israel, to indicate that he bears (in symbol) the iniquity of Judah forty years, and of Israel three hundred and ninety. The language is; “For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days:—So shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. Then lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of Judah forty days:—I have appointed thee each day for a year.”—But observe throughout this passage that in every instance the word day is used

for a common day—never in the sense of year; and the word *year* means only one year; never three hundred and sixty years. True, the *symbolic act* of lying on one side forty days denoted that in this symbolic, representative manner he bears their forty years of sinning; but this extension of time from one day of symbol to one year of sin lies not in any peculiar use of the word “day,” for there is no peculiar use of it here; but it is in the symbol, and is there only by special divine arrangement and statement.—If the Lord had said “forty *days*” when he meant forty *years*, it would be somewhat to the point. But he did not use his words so. There is no proof that he ever did. Certainly this case does not afford the least particle of such proof.

(3.) Another somewhat analogous passage is 2 Pet. 3: 8: “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.” Unfortunately if this means any thing to the purpose, it means far too much. For if it applies to the case in hand, the word day means, not one year only, but one thousand years! And then, further, one thousand years mean one day, and our long millennium is cut down wofully! And then it would be impossible to tell which way to work out this problem—whether we must *multiply* by one thousand or *divide* by it! Who could tell us whether in any given prophecy a day means one thousand years, or a thousand years means one day?—Happily that little word “*as*” relieves us of all our perplexities, showing that the passage has nothing to do with this theory that God says day when he means year.

(4.) Much the most important passage ever thought of as proof of the theory in question is Dan. 9: 24–27—the celebrated prophecy of the “seventy weeks.” But this has been already examined in my commentary on the passage in its place, to which the reader can refer. He will there find these main points made, viz.: that the original word means in its singular number, a seven—a heptad; and this may be a seven of days or a seven of years: that the feminine plural is currently used for heptads of days; the masculine plural (which we have here) never by itself for the common week of days, but when a week of days is meant, the word *days* is appended, as in Dan. 10: 2, 3; and finally that after a word and a special form of a word which simply suggests the idea of a seven—a seven of something, we must ask—a seven of what? and must look for our answer in the context—in the thought already before the mind. In the present case, there can be no doubt that this thought is, the seventy *years* of captivity. Then seventy sevens of *years* must be the sense of this phrase, and it involves no usage of the word day to mean year—no usage of any current notations of time in a way to need multiplying by three hundred and sixty to get the actual time.

(5.) All individual proof texts failing, some will still fall back upon the general idea that prophecy has a special fondness for highly figurative language;—so that they seem to themselves to make a pretty strong argument for their theory when they call it an instance of strong *figurative language*—such as abounds in

prophecy.—But this is a simple fallacy. Those who say this fail altogether to notice what figures in rhetoric are. Perhaps they confound figures in rhetoric with figures in mathematics—two things most unlike in sense, however like in the word. If men would only notice that there is no rhetoric and no scope for the imagination in a mathematical process; *e. g.*, in multiplying by three hundred and sixty, they might be disabused of this fallacy. Figures in language turn on some resemblances which only the imagination can recognize and appreciate. But figures in mathematics make no appeal to the imagination. This “day-for-a-year theory” needs no function of the imagination to solve and apply it. It requires only a short process in multiplication—in simple mathematics. Has this the least analogy with the use of the word “light” for what is joyous and “darkness” for what is sad? Not the least imaginable. The failure to note such distinctions may serve to mislead and delude; it can serve no other purpose.

(6.) Of the proofs from usage for the theory in question, all the rest, known to me, are in the class yet to be fulfilled and verified; or rather, like Mr. Miller's Second Advent in 1843—yet to be exploded. Those which assign the final fall of Romanism to A. D. 1866 are soon to follow Mr. Miller's. It will be soon enough to believe this theory on the strength of *fulfilled prophecy* when the cases of suitable sort and in sufficient number do actually occur.—It is simply amazing that this theory has obtained so much credence on absolutely not the least foundation. Against all reasonable presumption—in the face of the strongest *prima facie* evidence against it, there should be a very imposing array of substantial argument for it before it gains any credence. How strange, then, that it has gained so much without the first particle of reliable proof?

4. It still remains to assume the offensive against this theory and show that fulfilled prophecy is all against it. So far as Bible history gives us the fulfillment of Bible prophecy in which notations of time are involved, the “*usus loquendi*” proves that words in prophecy denoting *time* are used in their common, normal sense, and never in the enigmatical, peculiar way affirmed by this theory.—Thus the Lord through Noah predicted the flood after one hundred and twenty years (Gen. 6: 3). Did it turn out to be 43,200 years, or only 120?—Again in reference to this flood, the Lord said to Noah (Gen. 7: 4), “Yet seven days and I will cause it to rain forty days and forty nights.” That would have been awful at forty years, and Noah and his company all that time shut up in the ark!—To Abraham (Gen. 15: 13) the Lord said, “Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land not theirs” (Egypt), “and they shall afflict them four hundred years.” Does this need to be multiplied by three hundred and sixty? Was the actual time four hundred years, or one hundred and forty-four thousand?—In Num. 14: 34, the prophecy stands, “Your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years.” Did it prove to be forty, or three hundred and sixty times forty—*i. e.*, fourteen thousand and four hundred?

—In Isa. 7: 8 is this prophecy: “Within sixty-five years shall Ephraim be broken that it be not a people.” Was this really sixty-five, or was it prophetic time” (so called), *i. e.*, twenty-three thousand and four hundred years? Even sixty-five carries the end several years beyond the end of the kingdom as destroyed by Shalmanezzer, B. C. 722, for the reign of Ahaz, son of Remaliah, lay B. C. 759–740. The prophet included a final crowning act by Esarhaddon, filling the country with colonists from other countries, and embraced this within the sixty-five years.—Isaiah (16: 14) predicted of Moab, “Within three years as the years of a hireling, shall the glory of Moab be contemned.” Should this be accounted as really three years, or as one thousand and eighty years? But if this is three, why is not three and a half in Dan. 7: 25, and 12: 7, just three and a half?—In Jer. 25: 4 it is predicted, “These nations (Judah included) shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” And Jer. 29: 10 reads, “After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good words toward you, in causing you to return to this place.” Now it was because these time-designations meant just what they said that Daniel could “understand by books the number of the years” of this captivity and adjust himself to it. It is plain that he had not a particle of confidence in this theory of a day for a year, and of one year named when three hundred and sixty years are really meant. If he had believed this theory, he would have set the restoration twenty-five thousand and two hundred years after the captivity; *i. e.*, 25,200–606=A. D. 24,594—and he must have despaired of living in this world to see it!—And now shall it be assumed that after having had such welcome proof that God means just what he says when he gives dates and numbers in prophecy, he will himself darken his own dates by enigmas that none can understand? Or if it be replied, This was not Daniel but the revealing angel, then I ask, Would not Daniel have protested against it, saying, I have myself been exceedingly comforted, aided, and blessed by being able to understand by books when the divine numbers in prophecy would end; but how of this? No mortal can ever understand it! O, if Daniel might only speak out of heaven to those who so darken his plain words and so magnify his simple numbers, would he not rebuke them?—It can scarcely be necessary to refer to Ezek. 29: 11, 13, which predicts a temporary captivity of Egypt; forty years; not fourteen thousand and four hundred years; nor to Jonah’s prophecy against Nineveh; “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” It would have changed the case very essentially if he had meant forty years. But why in such a case should not the Lord say what he means, even as he expects and requires men to do? Is there any conceivable reason why he should say day when he means year? Is this according to *truth*? And what can be the use of it?—One case yet, more important than any other, is that of Daniel’s own usage (Dan. 4: 16, 23, 25, 32). In each of these four verses it is predicted that king Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity would continue “until

seven times should have passed over him." So long he would be with the beasts of the field, would eat grass as oxen, and be wet with the dew of heaven. How long a period, is this?—The advocates of the theory in question maintain strenuously that Daniel's "time, times, and the dividing of time," or "an half," (chap. 7: 25, and 12: 7,) equals three and a half years, and that these being prophetic years are really twelve hundred and sixty years. On no one point are they more united and strenuous than on this. Now the same writer, in the same book, will use the same word in the same sense. Unless there be some very great difference in the circumstances, this rule must hold good. No rule of interpretation can be more vital or more reliable than this. But in the present case no difference of circumstance can be shown. Both are prophecy. Both use the same word; therefore it must be used in both cases in the same sense. If three years and a half in prophecy is really of actual time twelve hundred and sixty years, then "seven times," equal to seven years of prophetic time, becomes, when converted into actual time, twenty-five hundred and twenty years!—a long time, truly, for one man to eat grass!—Some people will think there must be something very special and even mysterious in this word, "a time," when used for a year, and hence they readily admit this theory of (so called) "prophetic time," when applied to Daniel's word, a "time." But the seven "times" [years] of the king's insanity is just as truly prophetic time as the three and a half "times" [years] of ascendancy of Antiochus over the Mosaic institutions and sacrifices—"times and laws."—The cases above adduced are not culled out—a few of this sort from amid many of the opposite. There *are none* of the opposite sort. There is not one case in all the Bible in which fulfilled prophecy shows that prophetic time is estimated on the rule of a day for a year. The usage of the Bible goes solid against this theory. When, from its nature, this theory ought to have the very strongest support from Bible usage before it can be reasonably accepted, it has not the first particle of proof in its behalf, either from Bible usage or from any other source.—As we might rationally expect, all scriptural usage shows that when God has given prophetic time, he *meant to have it understood*, and therefore used the language of men as men use it. One of his special objects in giving prophetic time has been to afford to his people the benefit of knowing the duration, or the era, as the case may be, beforehand. Therefore, he could no more employ a myth or a riddle to puzzle his people over his dates, than he could give precepts and inculcate duty in so blind a way that none could understand him without a new revelation to reveal his meaning. Is it not a marvel that interpreters of prophecy could so far ignore the veracity and the sober honesty of the Holy One as to impute to him such a use of language as this theory involves?

5. There is yet one more objection to this theory, lying in the fact that its advocates apply it only to the periods of Zion's calamity and persecution: never, or almost never, to the period of her prosperity. They apply it to the prophecies of the sway of Anti

christ; never to the prophecies of the true Messiah's reign. Scarcely a man within my knowledge has applied this enormous multiplier to the thousand years of Messiah's promised reign!—Now, it is bad enough to attempt to make capricious discriminations at all as to the usage of words, and say in one set of prophecies day means only day and year only year; while in another set, day means year, and one year means three hundred and sixty. This, I say, is bad enough at the best. But it is ineffably bad to apply this awful multiplier to the eras of antichristian rule and not to the duration of the Messiah's reign! Look at the reason why this discrimination is so revolting.—(1.) It assumes that God aims and plans to hide from his people the actual duration of their calamities until the time arrives; or, rather—worse yet—he purports to reveal it; gives us the usual words for well-known periods of time; but uses them so that his people will see only one three hundred and sixtieth part of the truth! He calls the time a day when really it is a year; he calls it three years and a half when really it is twelve hundred and sixty years!—Believe this of our God—who can?—If he had seen fit not to disclose the duration of the church's great calamity, very well. All his trustful children would bow submissively to his wisdom, and would still trust his love. But that he should profess to reveal it, and then state it at only one three hundred and sixtieth part of the actual time—that is simply horrible! And then to cap the climax, that he should state the duration of her prosperity in a way to make it seem all that it is,—this sets off the other usage in a still more strange and revolting light.—(2.) A second reason why this discrimination is so objectionable is, that it makes the reign of Antichrist relatively long and the reign of the real Christ relatively short. Antichrist triumphs twelve hundred and sixty years; Jesus Christ only one thousand! The eras of persecution, straitness and calamity, surpass the era of peace, truth, righteousness and salvation! I take it this is incredible. I have a full conviction that the greatness of God's mercy toward our world forbids it. The sure word of prophecy is absolutely and mightily against it—as witness what the Lord said by Isaiah (54: 7, 8); “For a small moment have I forsaken thee” (Zion) “but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee *for a moment*; but *with everlasting kindness* will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.” Does a moment compare with everlasting duration, as twelve hundred and sixty years to one thousand?—These points may, I trust, suffice to show why this theory never ought to be true and never can be.

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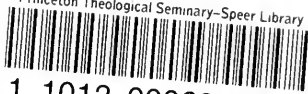
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