THE REVELATION OF JOHN

CHARLES C. WHITING

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AN INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND A TRANSLATION BY

CHARLES C. WHITING M.A., B.D.

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To My Wife
Whose Continuous Sympathy
and Valuable Assistance
Have Contributed Greatly
To This Volume

PREFACE

In the following pages an attempt is made to reach an interpretation of the Revelation of John that will be both reasonable and in accord with the best modern scholarship and at the same time so simple that the ordinary layman will find it easily within his grasp. It is hoped, therefore, that these pages may be found profitable by all who are interested in the interpretation of the closing book of the New Testament.

Although this volume is the result of study extending over many years it makes no claim to exhaustiveness; indeed it is only an interpretation, and that merely in outline, of the book. An accurate interpretation of every word and phrase of the book along historical lines is impossible in the present state of our knowledge, but enough is known to enable us to understand it in a general way, and this general knowledge is of very great practical value.

For the reader's convenience, and because careful study showed both the Authorized Version of 1611 and the Revised Version of 1885 to be defective, it was found necessary to include a fresh translation of the book in this volume. A translation, as literal as possible, into clear, simple, modern English has been the aim. Although in many ways the book is a difficult one for the translator it is hoped some success has been obtained. The translation is inserted as Appendix I. In Appendix II will be found brief explanations of the very few technical terms and proper names used in the volume the explanation of which might be helpful to some readers.

If the succeeding pages prove to be a help to the intelligent comprehension of the book the writer of them will rejoice that his labour has not been in vain.

C. C. W.

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

In order to obtain a proper understanding of any book of the Bible it is absolutely indispensable to know the circumstances surrounding it. The age in which it was written, the situation that called it forth, the author, and the purpose he had in view, the class of literature to which it belongs, as well as any other general features regarding it that throw light on its meaning, must be taken into account. This has been fully recognized for so long a time that no argument is needed to establish its truth. It applies however, with special force to the Book of Revelation. Few portions of the Canonical scriptures have been burdened and obscured by so many unreasonable and fantastic attempts to explain them as has this splendid book which, as Dr. Swete well says, is in some respects the crown of the New Testament canon. In the following pages an attempt is made to review these surrounding circumstances briefly and comprehensively but by no means exhaustively.

I

THE APOCALYPTIC AGE

While it may be freely admitted that the literature of the Persians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Egyptians furnishes many examples of apocalyptic writings, and while we find passages in the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament that present distinct apocalyptic features, yet it is to a certain period in the history of the Israelitish people and the Christian Church that the apocalyptic literature with which we are more immediately concerned belongs. This period may be called the Apocalyptic Age and extends, generally speaking, from the close of the seventh century before Christ when the Babylonian captivity began, to the Edict of Constantine in 313 A. D. Probably never in the world's history has any religion been called to pass through such a long period of extreme trial as this. There were conflicts with political powers, pagan religions, and foreign influences of various sorts, all of which were especially severe in the first and second centuries B. C. and the first century A. D. A brief review of the history of Judaism and Christianity during this long season of extreme trial will help us to see how the apocalyptic literature arose.

The conquest of Judah by the Babylonians was begun soon after they captured Nineveh in 606 B. C. and was carried on with all the barbarities of ancient warfare until the country was entirely in their power in 586 B. C. Jerusalem was besieged, and ultimately captured, many of the best people were carried away to Babylon, some of whom were treated to all the refinements of ancient cruelty. The city and temple were laid in ruins and remained so for many years, (See Dan. i:1, 2, 2 Kings xxiv and xxv, Ezek. i:1, 2, Esther ii:5, 6, Ezra i:7-11, 2 Chron. xxxvi:17-21, Jer. xxxiv:1, xxxix, lii).

The exile was complete from 586 B. C. to 536 B. C. and during that time the Jews were in a condition of nominal slavery in Babylon, which, while severe and trying as we learn from the

137th Psalm, was much less rigorous than that to which captive peoples were generally subjected. Probably however it will be nearer the truth to say that their condition varied with the place and time as we may gather from the indications in the narratives. The first band of exiles were allowed to build houses and plant gardens (Jer. xxix:5f) and to live in communities of their own (Ezra viii:17, Ezek. i:1) under their own elders (Ezek. viii:1, xxiv:1, xx:1) while Jehoiachin after many years captivity received consideration of the ruler (2 Kings xxv: 27ff). On the other hand the Chaldeans were often cruel (Jer. xxix:21ff) and afflicted them with hard service (Isa. xiv:3f).

The Persian period extended from 536 B. C. to 333 B. C. Although the records of this time are fragmentary and broken they are sufficient to show that the religious life of Israel made little real advance in spite of the return from the exile. The temple was rebuilt under difficulties (Ezra iv:2ff, v:3ff, v:16ff, vi:15, Hag. i:2) and the inter-marriage of the Jews with heathens would tend to diminish the vigour of the religion of Israel, (Ezra x). The walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt (Neh. vi:15), the condition of the poor improved (Neh. v:1-12), the law of God was published (Neh. viii:1-8), and other steps were taken to improve the religious condition of the people (Neh. ix and x). However years later Nehemiah found many old abuses still existing and took vigorous action to have them removed (Neh. xiii). It is clear that strong disintegrating influences were at work as is evident from the drastic measures taken by Ezra and Nehemiah to counteract them, and little if any permanent improvement was made in the religious condition of the Jews.

The Greek period (333-63 B. C.) shows us powerful foreign influences at work on the Jews and their religion. For centuries they had been scattering and as time passed they became more and more diffused over the whole civilized world. A great dispersion took place at the beginning of the third century B. C. when thousands of Jews were transported to Egypt to serve as colonists and support the reigning dynasty; besides, the opportunities of commerce attracted them. This dispersion brought them under Hellenizing influences. But their hearts were still at home and as they returned on visits to Jerusalem, themselves Hellenized, they exerted a subtle influence on the Jews in Palestine. So great was the Hellenizing influence that

the Scriptures had to be translated into the Greek in order that they might be able to read them. Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) endeavored to hasten this Hellenizing by force soon after he came to the throne of Syria in 175 B. C. For some years there was much disturbance, the temple being profaned and robbed and many citizens of Jerusalem put to death in 170 while in 168 the city was laid waste, orders given that Jewish rites in the temple should cease, and an idol altar "the abomination of desolation," set up in the temple instead, copies of the law were searched for and destroyed and merciless cruelties meted out to the Jewish inhabitants. It was the avowed intention to extirpate the Jewish religion. Every village was required to set up its heathen altar and heathen sacrifices must be duly offered by the citizens. But nothing could force Israel to abandon her ancestral worship. The terrible persecution served to fire the devotion of many, and as a result we find the Jews rising in rebellion under an aged but brave priest named Mattathias and his sons. This Jewish War of Independence was led by Judas Maccabaeus, a son of Mattathias, and was so successful that Israel became independent again (162 B. C.), restored her religious rites, and in spite of many attacks by the Syrians and others and of many complications and difficulties preserved her independence until Jerusalem was captured by the Roman general Pompey in 63 B. C.

The Roman period (B. C. 63 and onward to the Edict of Constantine 313 A. D.) sees the final overthrow of the Israelitish nation. Pompey besieged Jerusalem to put an end to the growing anarchy in the country, captured the city, demolished its walls, and is said even to have desecrated the Temple by entering the Holy of Holies itself, while eight years later Crassus again pillaged the Temple. There was much disturbance in the land until Roman rule was at last securely established in 37 B. C. A time of peace and prosperity followed. But in the second and third quarters of the first century A. D. discontent spread rapidly among the people. A systematic campaign was carried on to re-establish Roman power in Palestine. After reconquering and subduing the northern part of the country the city of Jerusalem was besieged by Titus, and fell after a siege of 143 days,—perhaps the most terrible in its history. The city was crowded by pilgrims attending the Passover while the season intensified the sufferings of the besieged, the final fall

of the city taking place in the hottest part of the year. Famine, thirst, disease, deportation of many of the inhabitants, and the crucifixion of fully 3500 of the best citizens until wood for crosses failed, completed the awful trials of the people of the ill-fated city. Thus in blood and fire the Jewish political system perished, while the Arch of Titus at Rome, adorned with the table of shew bread, the golden candlestick and the silver trumpets from the Temple, commemorated the great Roman victory.

While this conquest of Palestine was going on in the east the great persecution of the Christians was beginning further west. The great fire in Rome in A. D. 64 was viewed as a token of the displeasure of the gods who must be appeased while the people clamoured loudly that the injury be avenged. Nero, the emperor, soon decided on a persecution of the Christians as the best means of doing this, and thus inaugurated the great persecution of the Christians that continued with varying severity for nearly two hundred and fifty years. It became a crime to be a Christian, and a crime punishable by death, often of the most horrible character. Suspects were arrested and on conviction were forced to pay for their fidelity to Christ with their lives. In Rome under Nero they were clothed with skins of wild beasts and worried to death by dogs, cast to the lions to entertain the crowds at the theatres, or tied to posts, soaked with oil and allowed to burn alive, to light the gardens of the emperor at night. The persecution later became general throughout the empire and continued till liberty was given the Christians, to hold their meetings without molestation, by Constantine in 313 A. D.

This brief survey of the long period which has been designated, "The Apocalyptic Age" shows it to have been a very remarkable and trying one for the people of Israel and the early Christian church. For more than nine hundred years the chosen race and its Christian offshoot were forced to face the most powerful and continuous combination of disintegrating forces that has ever been directed against any race of people, and from a human point of view at least, the mitigating circumstances were few. The country was overrun and conquered again and again; their capital city was laid in ruins several times; their people were reduced to slavery or put to death in the most cruel way; strenuous efforts were made to crush their religion and put it out

of existence; their temple was several times desecrated in ways that were abhorrent to them; the influences of their Gentile conquerors were brought to bear on them powerfully by the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans in succession; attempts to force them to adopt the pagan religion of their conquerors were made with death as the penalty for refusal; their people were becoming more and more scattered over the world, while the voice of authoritative prophecy was growing increasingly faint, until in the Maccabean time or earlier, it ceased entirely to speak in any way that Israel's people could recognize as the message of God. It is true that the Persian period gave them the opportunity of returning to Palestine and allowed them some religious and political freedom and that the Maccabean revolt brought them temporary independence. But these were of little permanent value to them because in the former they were too weak to make much permanent advance, while in the latter they were continually beset by influences so powerful that they must ultimately be overwhelmed by them.

On four distinct occasions things reached a crisis for the Jews—the overthrow and enslavement of Judah by the Babylonians, the age of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Roman conquest, and the final subjugation under the Romans, the climax coming in the Roman period and especially with the conquest of Jerusalem under Titus. Under the crushing rule of the Romans all earthly hope of national and religious restoration disappeared.

As the hope of restoration to national and religious eminence decreased, two things rapidly developed. First the Messianic hope. It became increasingly clear to the devout and thoughtful among the people that Israel's only hope was in God and especially in the promised Deliverer. This hope was very strong in the first century A. D. Although Christians recognize Jesus of Nazareth as its fulfilment, He has never been recognized as such by the Jewish people as a whole and they still look forward to the coming of the Anointed One of God. Secondly the rise and development of the Apocalyptic Literature. But this brings us to the next section.

II

THE APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

Apocalyptic Literature naturally belongs to the period designated above as the Apocalyptic Age. Passing over the brief apocalyptic passages in the older books we find the first distinctly apocalyptical book is Ezekiel though it is interspersed here and there with historical and prophetic passages. Ezekiel was a priest and one of a band of Hebrews who were transported to Babylonia. His book belongs to the earlier half of the period of the captivity. The Book of Daniel also belongs to the time of the Babylonian captivity if we accept the older view of its date.

The golden age of Apocalyptic Literature however was roughly speaking from about 200 B. C. to about 100 A. D. at least so far as its influence on the Canonical Scriptures is concerned. In this period we find the trying times of the Maccabees and the horrors of the two Roman conquests with the opening decades of their terrible persecution of the Christians. To the times of the Maccabees the Book of Daniel is now generally assigned by scholars, while nearly a score of Jewish extra canonical writings of the same class belong to the period covered by the first and second centuries B. C. and the first century A. D. The Book of Revelation which forms the close of our New Testament, comes in the latter half of the first century after Christ. There are many apocalyptic writings—both Jewish and Christian,—which were composed after 100 A. D. but as they have no important bearing on the interpretation of the Apocalypse of John we need not pause to consider them.

That we may have a better general idea of the nature of apocalyptic writings of the period from 200 B. C. to 100 A. D. let us look more in detail at the earlier extra-canonical Jewish apocalypses. We may pass over the canonical books of Ezekiel and Daniel for the present as every Bible student has them before him.

1. The Ethiopic Enoch will be first on our list. After an introduction, in which the author announces his parable and

appeals for attention (chapters 1-5), there are five main sections or parts. The first section (chap. 6-36) tells of the fall of two hundred angels who were enticed by the beauty of the daughters of men to leave heaven and become their husbands. From these unions came a race of giants three thousand cubits high. The men were taught many secrets by the angels and so led into all sin, after which the giants set upon them, consumed their possessions and smote them till their cry went up to heaven and God made the slaughter to cease, condemning the angels to be enchained and imprisoned under the hills until the time of final judgment when they shall be burned. Then all people shall pray to God, the righteous shall flourish and live long and the earth shall yield abundantly. The details of the punishment are revealed to Enoch in a dream. The second section (chap. 37-71) consists of a short introductory section and three similitudes. In the first the Messiah, the Righteous One, appears and puts an end to sinners on the earth while Enoch, carried by the clouds to heaven, beholds the Kingdom of God and the abode of the righteous and the angels, the weighing of men's actions in the balances, the place of Wisdom in heaven, and many physical mysteries such as lightnings, thunderings, hail, mist, clouds, sun and moon. In the second similitude Messiah's Judgment is the theme. Enoch sees the Son of Man beside the Head of Days while an angel explains the vision. The third similitude explains the blessedness of the righteous in heaven and the judgment and punishment of angels and men with a vision of Noah and the deluge, after which Enoch is admitted to Heaven. The third section (chap. 72-82) contains a revelation given by the angel on all sorts of geographical and astronomical matters such as the course of the sun, moon and winds, untoward days, changes to come in the last times and the return of Enoch to the earth. The fourth section (chap. 83-90) is a forecast of the future in which the deluge and the whole history of Israel from the creation of man to the end of time are revealed to him in symbolic form in visions. The fifth section is a series of exhortations (chap. 91-105) in which Enoch delivers an address on righteousness designed to instruct the righteous of all ages to come, to which are added final encouragements and messages of hope. The conclusion of the book (chap. 106-108) dwells on the marvels to accompany the birth of Noah and describes again the fiery

tribulations that await the wicked and the blessings in store for the righteous.

The Ethiopic Enoch, together with the Slavonic Enoch, are fragments of an extensive Enoch literature. In Gen. v: 24 we read that "Enoch walked with God." This was understood to mean that he enjoyed superhuman privileges and received special revelations from God. It was natural then, that in the centuries when apocalyptic literature flourished a number of writings should circulate under his name. The Ethiopic Enoch as we have it now is believed by Dr. Charles and other students to be a composite work, its different parts being the productions of different authors in the first and second centuries before Christ.

2. The Slavonic Enoch or as Dr. Charles designates it, The Book of the Secrets of Enoch, is one of the most recent additions to our collection of apocalyptic literature. Its date is given as between 30 B. C. and 70 A. D. probably 1-50 A. D. and like the Ethiopic Enoch is regarded as of composite authorship.

The Book tells how Enoch is taken up into the first heaven by two angels where he sees two hundred angels guarding the treasuries of the snow, dew, and oil. They convey him to the second heaven where he sees and converses with the fallen angels. In the third heaven, the paradise prepared for the righteous, he is led to the northern region where he is shown the place of torture. In the fourth heaven, the abode of the sun and moon, he sees mysterious composite beings with heads of crocodiles and bodies of serpents, hears their song and the indescribable music of angels. He passes through the fifth and sixth heavens to the seventh where he worships the Lord who is seated on a throne, holds direct converse with Him, is anointed and enrobed in suitable apparel. From the Lord and an archangel he learns the secrets of creation, of the formation of angels and human beings, of man's fall and judgment and of God's purpose for the future. He writes many books and then returns to earth for thirty days to impart the true knowledge of God. On his return to earth Enoch tells of his impressions in the heavens, of how he received his visions and wrote them down, and instructs his hearers in the things that he says are most pleasing to God. He enjoins them to give heed to and circulate his writings, announcing at the same time that the hour

for his ascension to heaven has come. After giving a further series of instructions Enoch is mysteriously taken up into heaven while a thick darkness covers the earth.

3. The Sibyline Oracles are a collection of poems in hexameter verse from Jewish, Christian, heathen and neutral sources. According to Ewald and Alexandre they extend over a period of more than 400 years from 140 B. C.

The Oracles contain an account of human history from the Creation to the dispersion of the Jews, the reign of the Romans and the time of Christ. There are many predictions of wickedness, plagues, woes, judgments of the wicked and righteous, and the resurrection, as well as of impending calamities to fall on various nations and peoples, the coming of God and the Messianic age. The Jews and Judaea are praised while other peoples and countries are denounced. The teaching, miracles, baptism, incarnation and pre-existence of the Son of God are described.

4. The Assumption of Moses. This work was lost for several centuries but an old Latin version of it was found in Milan in 1861. It was probably written during the earthly life of our Lord, i. e. 1-30 A. D.

The book tells how Moses appoints Joshua as his successor and gives him his writings to preserve carefully. He forecasts the destinies of the tribes and how they will fall into idolatry and then repent after a king from the east has burned their colony and temple and made them captives; how on the prayers of a certain one some would return but later their priests would again become idolatrous through the influence of wicked, usurping, and tyrannous kings. Then there follow predictions of awful persecutions, after which the Most High will appear, establish His kingdom, bless and exalt Israel and punish the Gentiles, while darkness covers the trembling earth and the sun and moon refuse to shine. Moses again charges Joshua to keep these words safe, declares that from his death to the Advent will be two hundred and fifty times, places him in his own seat and comforts him by reminding him of the providence of God.

5. Fourth Ezra contains a series of seven visions and in the Latin version some extra chapters. In the first vision Ezra's mind is disturbed by doubts as to the origin of sin and suffering in the world; an angel answers that God's ways are inscrutable and the mind of man can comprehend little. But as

Ezra pleads the pain of ignorance on such vital matters the angel assures him of a change of aeon about to come and bids him fast for seven days at the end of which he will receive further revelations. In the second vision Ezra is informed that God loves His people though He has given them into the hand of the heathen for reasons beyond the comprehension of man, but deliverance is drawing near. The third vision comes after another seven days' fast, and in it Ezra is informed that the reason why Israel does not possess her own land is that an evil age must precede the good, that God's mercy is consistent with the sufferings of those condemned, that the Son of God is coming in judgment with terrible punishment for the evil-doers and much joy for the righteous. The fourth vision pictures Zion's present sorrow and coming glory, the fifth the world empire, and the sixth the Son of God establishing the Messianic Age, while the seventh contains the legend of Ezra's rewriting the lost Scriptures. The book concludes with an account of Ezra's decease. The book belongs to the last quarter of the first Christian century.

6. The Apocalypse of Baruch is one of a number of books ascribed by their authors to Baruch, the companion and assistant of Jeremiah. The Apocalypse of Baruch in a Syriac text was brought to light by Ceriani and later published by him. Various opinions are held as to its authorship and date, Dr. Charles, probably the best English authority on extra-canonical apocalyptic literature, believes it to have been the product of several independent works pieced together during the latter half of the first Christian century. The resemblances of the book to Fourth Esdras are so numerous and striking that they have been called "the twin apocalypses."

In the book Baruch is represented as speaking in the first person, of events that are represented as taking place in and around Jerusalem about the time of its capture by the Chaldeans. The book opens with an account of God's condemnation of the wickedness of Judah and His determination to chastise her for a time. The next day the Chaldeans encompass the city after the angels have overthrown the walls and hidden the sacred vessels. The people are taken captive by the Chaldeans and the city is temporarily delivered to them. Jeremiah is commanded to go with the captives to Babylon and Baruch to remain in Jerusalem to receive disclosures of the future. Baruch

fasts and gives way to utter despair. But in the revelations from God he learns that he will endure to the end though there will be troublous times with punishment for the wicked and exaltation for the righteous. Baruch is then informed as to his coming departure from the earth and is commanded to gather together the people and instruct them, which he does. At the request of the people Baruch writes letters to their brethren across the Euphrates and in Babylon.

7. The Greek Baruch, another apocalyptic book bearing the name of Baruch, was discovered and published in 1896 though it was known to have existed in early times. It was written in the second century A. D. apparently to fulfil a promise in the Syriac Baruch that after forty days God would give Baruch further revelations regarding the material world.

As Baruch prays and laments over the fall of Judah an angel visits him and takes him up to heaven where he sees astounding creatures, hybrids of oxen, sheep, goats, men, etc., under the figures of which the mysteries of the natural world are explained to him as well as their relation to the righteous and the wicked in the world. After all this the gate of heaven closes and the angel returns to earth with Baruch.

8. The Psalter of Solomon is a name given to a collection of eighteen independent psalms written by various authors between 70 and 40 B. C. from an early date ascribed to Solomon by others, though the psalms nowhere claim him as their author.

Psalms 1, 2, and 8 deal with the sin and punishment of Jerusalem and the fate of its besieger. Psalms 3, 13, 14 and 15 contrast the righteous and the wicked while Psalm 4 describes and denounces the "menpleasers." Ps. 5, 6 and 9 tell of God's justice and mercy to the righteous. Ps. 12 describes the deeds and punishment of the deceitful tongue. Ps. 7 and 16 are made up of prayers, confessions, and praise. Ps. 10 dwells on the benefits of suffering. Ps. 11, 17 and 18 speak of the overthrow of the Jews and their coming restoration under the Messiah.

9. A number of writings based on the Book of Genesis may be mentioned.

A. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs represents each of the twelve sons of Jacob in turn calling his children to him just before his death and addressing them retrospectively and prospectively much as Jacob does in Gen. 49, each however

speaking on a different theme, each testament speaking of some merit or defect prominent in his life. The Testaments are thought to be originally the work of several Jewish writers in the first and second centuries B. C. but during the first three centuries of our era additions were made to them by several Christian writers.

B. The Histories of Adam and Eve purport to be an account of the life of the first pair from their expulsion from the Garden of Eden to their death and burial. The date of the book is quite uncertain.

C. The Apocalypse of Abraham tells how this patriarch came to dislike the idolatry of his father, whereupon an angel visited him, taught him to offer sacrifice and carried him on the wings of a dove to heaven where he received many revelations.

D. The Book of Jubilees follows the general plan of the Book of Genesis and the first fourteen chapters of Exodus, and in its main points agrees with the canonical narrative but with many additions and alterations. The book was sometimes called "Little Genesis" and belongs to the period between, say, 100 B. C. and 100 A. D.

10. The Ascension of Isaiah is one of several non-canonical books bearing the name of Isaiah referred to by ancient writers and so far apparently the only one discovered and identified. The book is in two parts, Part I (the Martyrdom) was probably composed in the first century B. C. while Part II seems to belong to the second century A. D. Later additions were made, some of them by a Christian writer.

The first part deals with the martyrdom of Isaiah whom Manasseh causes to be sawn asunder because he has prophesied falsely and refuses to admit his error. The prophet calmly bears death and derision conversing the while with the Holy Spirit. The second part tells how Isaiah in the 20th year of Hezekiah fell into a trance and saw a vision. An angel conveys him to the seven heavens, all of which he visits in succession, beholding the departed patriarchs and the righteous in glory and even God Himself, and learning of the future coming of Christ. On his return to earth he tells the vision to the king and his council, after which he is put to death.

11. Various other apocalyptic writings are known to have existed but only a few fragments of them have been recovered. Among these may be mentioned the Apocalypses of Elias and

Zephaniah, the Prayer of Joseph, and the Book of Eldad and Medad.

12. Of late Christian and Jewish apocalypses quite a number are known. The Ascension of Paul (Anabaticon Pauli) and Revelations of Stephen and Thomas are ascribed to the Gnostic period; the Apocalypse of Peter to the second century; the Apocalypse of Paul to the fourth century. There were also a spurious Apocalypse of John, an Apocalypse of Sedrach, and an Apocalypse of the Virgin, all of which are late in date. All these non-canonical books are very much inferior to the canonical apocalypse, and do not concern us particularly.

We observe certain general characteristics in apocalyptic writings.

1. The vision is very prominent. The authors assume the part of seers and present to their readers vivid and striking pictures, in many cases fantastic and unreal, of what they have themselves observed in their assumed role.

2. The distinction between the world of sense and the world of the unseen reality is always in the mind. The writers aim at making the unseen real to the senses and mind of their readers, and in a way to transcend this dualism.

3. The apocalypse is always a revelation as the name signifies, and may be either (A.) of the mechanism of the other world as it affects its inhabitants and this world, or (B.) of the purposes of God as expressed in the events of the past, or his determined plans for the future.

4. Again the apocalypse abounds in symbolic figures often of the most extraordinary kind. Symbolic numbers frequently occur, seven and twelve being specially common.

5. Angels play a large part in the visions that go to make up apocalyptic literature and often an angel is represented as accompanying the seer and acting as a friendly guide and interpreter to him.

6. Pseudonymity is a noticeable characteristic of apocalyptic writings, the authors showing a general and well marked preferance for those who are mentioned in the Old Testament as having enjoyed special communications with the spiritual world or attained to exceptional holiness and nearness to God.

7. Apocalyptic literature as a class is designed to comfort and encourage those who are suffering affliction or persecution. While fully recognizing the greatness of the evil from

which the people suffer, it is yet filled with an unconquerable optimism. It commonly represents the future as very hopeful because certain to bring suffering and destruction to the persecutors and peace, deliverance, and exaltation to the afflicted.

8. Perhaps more than any other class of writings the Apocalypses show signs of having been edited and modified by later hands, while many of them are evidently compilations.

9. Probably it ought to be added that there is no class of literature that is so difficult to understand or about which there is more general disagreement among students and scholars. This is partly due to its nature and partly also to the fact that until recent years it received little serious study.

Apocalyptic literature flourished at a time when prophecy was believed to be in suspense. Apocalyptic and prophetic writings both claim to expound the character, will, and purposes of God as well as the laws and nature of His kingdom. But they differ chiefly because they minister to people in vastly different circumstances; the latter ministered to people who were transgressing or failing to conform to the known law of God and therefore called them to repentance, etc.; the former addressed a people who believed themselves to be God's people but could not understand why God in His righteousness should permit them to suffer at the hands of heathen transgressors.

The great aim of apocalyptic literature was to give comfort and encouragement to God's suffering people by bringing them some message from Him and some hope for the future. It tried to answer the question "Why do the righteous suffer if God is just?" by explaining that it was according to the Divine plan that now the righteous should suffer and the wicked flourish, but the future had in store a time of judgment and a Messianic age; that in this judgment both the righteous and the wicked would receive their just deserts, while in the Messianic age the righteous would be exalted and flourish, while the wicked would be no more.

From what has been said we may readily draw some conclusions regarding the method of interpretation of apocalyptic writings. As the apocalyptic writers had to do with the present and immediate, and not with the distant future, the "futurist" method of interpretation is excluded. Historical persons,

nations, or events are represented by figures that have been invented for the purpose or freely adopted from the Old Testament, from tradition, or from other writings, in which case the interpreter must distinguish between the author's use of the figure and its original significance. The apocalyptic writers drew freely on ancient material which they introduced entire or modified more or less to suit their purpose. This necessitates a wise use of literary criticism. Then we must bear in mind the underlying religious faith and the immediate practical aim of the writer and ask how far his strange descriptions of the unseen were literal and how far figurative even to himself. Then there is the question of whether the vision is merely a literary form or was the writer really describing actual exstatic experiences.

III

THE REVELATION OF JOHN AS AN APOCALYPSE

The Book of Revelation is an apocalypse and bears a close relationship to apocalyptic literature in general as may be seen by even a casual reader. The following points of likeness may be mentioned:

1. The Book of Revelation is the crown of the golden age of apocalyptic literature. Belonging as it does to the latter half of the first Christian century it follows in the path of a long line of notable Jewish apocalyptic writings all of which it much surpasses in real excellence and marks the climax for them, while after it nothing approaching its equal appears.

2. The book takes the form of a vision which begins at i:10 and continues to xxii:20.

3. There is always in the author's mind the distinction between this world and the other world as he saw it in his vision. In evidence of this it is enough to note that he speaks from the point of view of one who is in this world, while his narrative is a revelation of the other world.

4. It is a revelation of God's plans and purposes as indicated in the opening verses.

5. Symbolic figures and numbers are very common, A. Figures: candlesticks and stars i:12, i:16, i:20, living creatures iv:6-8, horses vi:2, 4, 5, 8, locusts ix:3, the woman xii:1, dragon xii:3, the great beast xiii:1, another beast xiii:11, the woman and beast xvii:3, etc., B. Numbers: seven is very common i:20, v:1, 6, viii:1, 6, etc., x:3, etc., three viii:13, four iv:6, vii:1, twelve vii:5-8, xii:1, ten xiii:1, xvii:3, etc., and larger numbers which are mostly multiples of these, as twenty-four, one hundred and forty-four thousand, etc.

6. Angels vii:1, viii:2, x:1, xiv:6, 8, 9, 15, 17, 18, xv:6, etc. Angels accompany the seer and show him sights, and assist him to understand them, iv:1, xix:10, xxi:9, xxii:8, etc.

7. Its aim and purpose is plainly in accord with those of apocalyptic literature generally, to encourage faith and endurance in the midst of severe trial, i:1-3, ii:5-7, 10, 11, 16, 17, 25-29, iii:2, 3, 5, 9-13, 18-22, vi:9, 11, vii:4, 14-17, xiii:10, xiv:12, 13, xx:1-3, xxi, xxii, etc.

In addition to these well defined points of relationship to

Jewish apocalyptic literature there are some notable points of unlikeness.

1. The book is not pseudonymous. The author plainly designates himself at the beginning and end of the book (i:1, 4, 9, xxii:8). If this were a pseudonymous designation it is reasonable to suppose that the writer would be careful to describe himself as John the son of Zebedee, or in some such way. As he does not do this, and as John was a very common name in later Judaism, the New Testament, and the early church, we conclude that he is giving his own name as that of the actual author. Furthermore he calls his work a prophecy (i:3) and as he is conscious of drawing his inspiration direct from Christ and His angel he has no need to hide his identity behind the name of any biblical saint.

2. This prophetic spirit finds particular expression in the letters to the seven churches. While these occupy a distinctly apocalyptic setting their spirit and purpose is distinctly prophetic. It is with actual conditions in the Christian communities that they deal, and the praise, blame, encouragements, and warnings which they convey are given with so much discernment and earnestness, and the calls to repentance are so strong that we feel the prophetic spirit in them all.

3. It is very difficult to determine the date and other circumstances connected with the issuance of the Jewish apocalypses. But our apocalypse plainly announces its author and destination and its date is sufficiently clear to enable us to determine it within two or three decades.

4. Our apocalypse differs from the Jewish apocalypses in that it is distinctly Christian, though doubtless our author drew heavily on Jewish sources. The Jewish apocalypse presents a narrow sphere of Jewish national hopes and an uncertain and unrealized idea of a Jewish Messiah but little or none of the finer spirit of patient endurance. Our book, on the other hand, exhibits a society whose sphere is the world and whose goal is its conquest. For it, Jesus Christ is victorious, ascended, and glorified; and its religious spirit is one of patient suffering, unflagging faith, love of the brethren, hatred of evil, and unconquerable hope.

From these considerations it is evident that our book stands in a class by itself, and far excels in merit any other writing of its kind.

IV

THE HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN

Throughout the whole of the first Christian century the Roman Empire held almost undisputed sway over the whole of the civilized world as it was then known. All northern Africa, all western Asia, and all southern and western Europe, including Britain, was then included in its dominions.

In religious matters the Empire was from one point of view very generous and from another exceedingly strict. On the one hand the religion of Rome was paganism and each province kept its own deities and its own system of worship. On the other hand, as time went on Roman authorities came to see that one of the strongest forces to hold together the various elements in the Empire was religion. The ambitious nature of Augustus (Octavianus) led him to be designated as "Pontifex Maximus" and it required only another step to reach the stage when emperors were considered divine and worshipped as gods. The fundamental purpose of the Roman poet Virgil in his great epic, "The Aeneid" was to show that the emperors were descendants from the gods; therefore they were proper subjects of worship, and as the Emperor was the official head and the visible expression of the Empire, loyalty to the Empire and worship of the Emperor came to be closely related and in many cases practically the same thing.

The attitude of the Empire to Christianity in the early decades of its existence was on the whole generous. Christianity seems to have been tolerated and protected as a Jewish sect, though occasionally its leaders found themselves imprisoned (as Paul on various occasions) or forced to defend themselves in Roman courts or before Roman officials, and some even suffered death. It is to be noted, however, that in this period these difficulties and hardships were due, not to any settled policy of opposition to Christianity on the part of the Empire, but to the opposition of the Jews or others with whom the representatives of Christianity came in contact.

In the reign of the Emperor Nero, however, the Empire assumed a different attitude to Christianity; and as this atti-

tude is due chiefly to Nero himself we must look for a moment at him and his reign.

Nero was the son of Domitius and Agrippina and was born in 37 A. D., both his parents belonging to the family of the Caesars. Agrippina was a very ambitious woman and given to the use of strategy. She first secured her own marriage to her uncle, the Emperor Claudius, and then the betrothal of Nero to Octavia, the daughter of Claudius, and later the adoption of Nero as the son of Claudius and his successor on the throne. On the death of Claudius in 54 A. D. through the strategy of Agrippina Nero was allowed to take the throne. During the early years of his reign his advisors were good and his rule beneficent so that he won much personal favor, though even then he exhibited qualities which were far from commendable, being given to vanity, adulterous amours, and nocturnal escapades in which he committed outrages on peaceful citizens. But in 58 A. D. he fell under the influence of Poppaea, a Jewess, the wife of Otho (afterwards emperor) who aspired to be empress herself and became the chief cause of his complete demoralization and many crimes. The appointment of evil men to positions of influence, the removal and murder of influential senators, the vile and shameless character of imperial orgies, the divorce and banishment of Octavia through the evidence of perjured witnesses and later her murder, Nero's espousal of Poppaea and bestowal on her of the title of Augusta, the unrestrained extravagance and consequent financial embarrassment relieved by oppressive taxation and confiscation of the property of wealthy citizens who were charged with treason, and the exhibition of Nero himself on the stage,—all showed how corrupt his rule had become and how vile his private life had grown.

As Nero was the Caesar to whom St. Paul appealed (Acts xxv:11) his relation with the Christians began early. It is probable, though not certain, that St. Paul was tried by him in person and the common view is that he was acquitted. But in A. D. 64 the toleration of the Empire to the Christians ceased. A great fire raged for nine days in July of that year totally destroying three and partially destroying seven of the fourteen districts of the city. Nero himself was commonly blamed as the cause of the conflagration but whether guilty or not has never been proven. Nero, however, blamed the Christians,

many of whom were brought to trial and convicted not so much of incendiarism as of hatred of the human race. The sentence of conviction was most brutally executed, some were covered with the skins of wild beasts and worried to death by dogs while others were covered with pitch and set on fire at night to illumine Nero's gardens. In this persecution under Nero we recognize a step in the development of the Imperial policy against the Christians from persecution for alleged particular crimes to persecution because they were Christians, though just when this stage was completed is a disputed point.

In A. D. 65 a conspiracy was organized to depose Nero, but its existence was disclosed before its object was accomplished, and its leaders were put to death. Then a reign of terror followed. Almost every prominent citizen against whom any pretext could be found was executed. The murderous frenzy of the emperor was matched by the callousness of the public and the servility of the senate which out did itself in voting divine honors to Nero and to Poppaea. Amid all his vices Nero continued to be a devotee of art. He played on the lyre, sang, posed as an orator, wrote poetry and gave attention to sculpture, acted on the public stage and was an accomplished charioteer. A visit to Greece in A. D. 66 gave him fresh opportunity to exercise both his murderous frenzy and his devotion to art. While the slaughter continued in Rome many eminent and wealthy citizens in Greece shared the same fate at his bidding. At the Greek games which were crowded into his visit he found opportunity to enjoy what appeared to be even greater appreciation of his talents then he had received at Rome, for every notable prize was awarded him so that he attained the coveted distinction of universal victor.

On his return to Rome he found strong and organized opposition, but it was then too late to stem the tide of insurrection. A conspiracy had been formed to put Galba governor of Hither Spain on the throne. Nero fled in disguise from the city to the suburban villa of a faithful friend where he committed suicide to avoid a more ignominious fate as emissaries of the senate drew near. This was in A. D. 68. So obscure was his death that it was commonly believed that he had not really died but was in hiding or had fled to Parthia and would appear again to claim the throne of the Empire. Indeed several pretended Neros arose to take advantage of his supposed

survival and several later writers refer to it.

This was the beginning of the great persecution of the Christians by the state, a persecution which with more or less interruption lasted for two hundred and fifty years until Constantine by his famous edict issued in 313 A. D. brought religious freedom.

In general it may be said that during the latter half of the first century A. D. the Empire was at the zenith of its power and glory. Its conquest and rule had brought much benefit to the different peoples in its wide dominions and made the advent and progress of Christianity possible. But while at the acme of its excellence internal decay and disintegration were well advanced. Riches and luxury and vice were perhaps more common than ever before among its people. Devotion to the old religious ideals had waned and the only thing to take its place was the worship of the Emperor.

In as much as the Apocalypse of John is addressed more particularly to Christians in the Roman province of Asia, and especially to those in seven cities definitely named we must survey conditions more closely there.

The Roman province of Asia between 50 and 100 A. D. included most of the western half of what is now known as the peninsula of Asia Minor. It comprised Mysia, Lydia, Caria, a large part of Phrygia, and a number of islands off the west coast in the Aegean Sea. The province as thus formed was bounded on the north by the Sea of Marmora and Bithynia, on the east by Galatia, on the south by Lycia, and on the west by the Aegean Sea. It reached inward a distance of some three hundred English miles from the coast while its greatest breadth north and south was about two hundred and sixty. It was one of the wealthiest and most populous of the Roman provinces as well as one of the most loyal to the Empire. Augustus was deified as the Saviour of mankind and worshipped most enthusiastically in public and in private as God incarnate. The part of the province with which we are more particularly concerned was watered by four rivers, the Caicus, Hermus, Cayster, and Maeander, and broken by three ranges of hills, Sipylus, Tmolus, and Messogis. Asia was remarkable for the number and importance of her cities, Adramytium, Alabanda, Apamea, Ephesus, Laodicea, Pergamum, Sardis, Smyrna, Synnada, Cyzicus, Philomelium, and Tralles were all import-

ant, while many others were worthy of note such as Colossae, Dorylaeum, Eumenia, Hierapolis, Magnesia, Miletus, Philadelphia, Priene and Thyatira. Among the more important towns there was a keen rivalry, several claiming the dignity of a "metropolis," and the rank and title of "first of Asia."

The people of the province were among the most active intellectually in the whole Empire. No people on the whole continent of Asia were better educated, more highly civilized or more completely Hellenized. In most of the western part the native languages had disappeared and been replaced by Greek. Religion also was outwardly Hellenized in the cities, but only outwardly as the original ritual and character was retained, and in the rural districts even the outward form. There was much of unity in diversity and diversity in unity among the people. Especially was there diversity in race, language, customs, and religion, though the constant aim of the Imperial rule was to make out of the many diverse elements a unified Graeco-Roman province. No attempt was made to crush out the different languages, though Greek was the only one recognized, nor to destroy the ancient religious customs, though all must perform the required religious rites to the Emperor. Ultimately the attempt at unification proved unsuccessful.

The persecution of the Christians in the province was really the attempt to enforce this unifying process in matters of religion. The Jews were an important element in the population of the province and among them there was always a certain unity of feeling. They were resident aliens who for purposes of trade or otherwise remained often for long periods, and Jews who had acquired the franchise and freedom of Roman citizenship. But the Jewish religious scruples were always respected, though this exception was a continued pain to the Hellenic citizens. Then from the time of Paul's missionary journeys there was an influential and growing body of Christians in all the chief centres and many of the more obscure places and smaller towns of the province. Asia Minor afterwards became the stronghold of Christianity. While sufficiently numerous and influential to force recognition from their pagan neighbors, the Christians were yet far from attaining the ideal of excellence which they should have reached, as a study of the seven letters in the Apocalypse will show. All the evi-

dence we have goes to show that no exception was made for the Christians as for the Jews in religious matters. Everywhere in Asia they found themselves in conflict with a paganism which entered every phase of the life of the people. Indeed their refusal to comply with the outward legal forms of the state religion was the immediate cause of the persecutions they suffered. Then there were the pagans, differing according to their race and religious association and their contact with Greek and Roman influences, and many degraded from practises loathsome and vile in the extreme. These elements, pagan, Jewish, and Christian entered into the life of the larger cities and more important towns. Those who made up the Christian churches came invariably from one or more of these three classes. 1. The children of Christian parents who were thus all their lives Christians. There would be a few of these as early as A. D 70 and a considerable percentage of them in the Church by the close of the century. 2. The Jews who had embraced Christ and became Christians. These would be familiar with the Synagogue and its services and in some ways were the best prepared to be the strength and support of the Christian communities. 3. Then there were the pagans that had received the gospel. Everywhere in the province of Asia, Christianity found itself opposed to the Jewish and pagan systems, both of which were deeply rooted in the interests of their respective classes of people and affected their entire spheres of life.

We can see how slowly but certainly things were shaping for a great religious conflict in the province of Asia. As time went on it was becoming continually more evident that the new religion must measure itself with the old in a life and death struggle. This conflict had emerged when the Apocalypse was written. While the same thing in a general way took place wherever the Gospel was preached and received, the province of Asia was the great battle ground, because it was the meeting place of east and west and the place where Christianity obtained its first great foothold.

It was not merely a conflict between a new religion and an old for supremacy but, as the writer of the Apocalypse and the little Christian Church saw it, two empires that were engaged in deadly conflict; on the one hand there was the Kingdom of Christ, of which the Christian Church was the earthly embodiment and expression, and on the other there was the world

power of Rome. The Empire stood behind paganism as its strength and support and thus as the power and expression of Satan in the world. The great conflict therefore appears as a conflict between God and Satan, Christ and Anti-Christ; and while the strife is a long one, the ultimate issue in the mind of the seer is never in doubt. Christ will triumph over all His enemies and come off more than conqueror. The Book of Revelation is a vivid picture of the combatants and the conflict, as well as a prophecy of the outcome.

V

ITS AUTHOR

The Apocalypse of John clearly indicates its author in chapter i: 1, 4, 9, and xxii: 8. This however merely informs us that his name was John, but does not enable us certainly to identify him with any one of the many persons of that name. He does indeed call himself the servant of Jesus Christ and says that he was in the isle which is called Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. By this expression he seems to mean that he was there because he had borne testimony to Christ, and therefore had been a consistent active Christian condemned to exile for a definite or indefinite period. He also appears to claim the rank and authority of a prophet (xxii: 9). John was a very common name in the first century of our era; at least five different persons are thus designated in the New Testament. From early times the prevailing opinion has been that the author of the Apocalypse was the son of Zebedee and one of the twelve apostles of our Lord, but the evidence as it has come down to us is by no means conclusive. A supposed "John the Elder" has from early times been recognized as the author, but it has been as hard to determine who he is as to identify the author of our book. Indeed the only safe conclusion is that to which most scholars have come, namely that we cannot identify the author beyond his own statements at the beginning and end of his book. A few scholars have taken the position that the book is pseudonymous, but that view seems hardly tenable as in that case it would seem only natural that the writer would declare his identity with the apostle of the same name as do the writers of the apocryphal apocalypses of Paul and John.

VI

ITS DATE

There is almost universal agreement that the Apocalypse was written in the last third of the first Christian century, but whether near the beginning of it or towards the close has been a much disputed point. The consensus of opinion in the early Christian Church was that it was written in the closing years of the reign of the Emperor Domitian, say 90-96 A. D. while some later, though still ancient, writers hold that it was written during the reign of Claudius, Nero, or Trajan. The chief arguments on which a conclusion must be based are the following: (A.) The condition of the churches as indicated in the epistles to the seven churches. (B.) The general historical situation in the Empire and the province of Asia as indicated or implied in the book. (C.) Some who assume the unity of the book and believe that it was written by the same person as the Fourth Gospel maintain that the Apocalypse is the earlier because, as they say, less developed in style and thought than the Gospel. (D.) The testimony of early Christian writers.

With regard to these points it may be said that they seem to point clearly to the later date, though fresh evidence may be discovered any time that will reverse this conclusion. The condition of the churches in the province as indicated in the book generally and in chapter ii—iii in particular appears to present aspects that had not begun to emerge in the time of Paul's missionary journeys nor even when he wrote his epistles to the churches there. The general historical situation implied or presented is one that our present knowledge does not enable us to discover in that part of the Empire until the closing years of the reign of Domitian. The testimony of early Christian writers is almost unanimous for the later date while the uncertainty regarding the authorship of the book makes it impossible to compare it with the Fourth Gospel.

VII

ITS UNITY

Is the Apocalypse of John as it lies before us a literary unity or can we find in it distinct evidence of two or more different authors?

For dual or multiple authorship it is argued; (A.) that as prophetic books such as Isaiah and Zechariah and apocalypses such as Enoch are of composite authorship, we may expect to find the Book of Revelation composite also; (B) want of formal and material connection showing itself in distinctive breaks like these at iii: 22, vii: 17, xi: 19, xiii: 18, xiv: 20, xvi: 21; (C.) the repetitions of the same thing in different connections, e. g., the 144,000 in vii: 4ff and xiv: 1ff, the Beast in xiii: 1ff and xvii, the New Jerusalem in xxi: 2 and xxii: 9, the Lamb in v: 6 and xiv: 1, (D.) the Last Judgment appearing at two widely separated points in the development of the book, i. e., at xiv: 14 ff and xxii: 11ff; (E.) different conceptions of Christ revealed in i: 13ff, v: 6, xiv: 14, etc., and of the Church in xii: 1ff, xvii: 7, xxi: 2, etc.; (F.) the different dates apparently implied in different parts of the book such as xi: 1ff, xiii: 18, xvii: 10f.

On the other hand the evidences of unity of authorship are numerous and unmistakable. Among these are: (A.) The beginning and end claims to be from the same author, i: 1, 4, 9, xxi: 2, xxii, while the same person seems to be indicated in various other places through the book, e. g. i: 10, 12, 17, 19, iv: 1, 2, 4, v: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 13, vi: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, vii: 1, 2, 4, 9, 13, 14, viii: 2, 13, ix: 1, 13, 16, 17, x: 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, xi: 1, xii: 10, xiii: 1, 2, 3, 11, xiv: 1, 2, 6, 13, 14, xv: 1, 2, 5, xvi: 1, 5, 7, 13, xvii: 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 15, 18, xviii: 1, 4, xix: 1, 6, 9, 10, 11, 17, 19, xx: 1, 4, 11, 12, xxi: 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 15, 22, xxii: 1, 6, 9, 10. (B.) This is seen also in a similarity of phraseology, e. g. i: 1 and iv: 1 and xxii: 6, i: 3 and xxii: 7, i: 3 and xxii: 10, i: 8 and xxi: 6 and xxii: 12, i: 17 and xxii: 13, ii: 7 and xxii: 17, ii: 7, 11, 17, 26, iii: 5, 12, 21 and xxi: 7, ii: 11 and xx: 6, 14 and xxi 8, ii: 28 and xxii: 16, iii: 11 and xxii: 12, iii: 12 and xxi: 2, i: 10 and iv:2, iv: 6 and xv: 2,

v: 5 and xxii: 16, v: 10 and i: 6, ix: 1 and xx: 1, x: 1 and i: 14f, xi: 1 and xxi: 15, xi: 7 and xvii: 8, xii: 9 and xx: 2, xiv: 13 and ii: 7 etc., xiv: 14 and i: 13, xv: 6 and i: 13, xvi: 15 and iii: 3, xvii: 1 and xxi: 9, xix: 12 and i: 14. These instances, with others that might be given, offer strong indication that the same hand has been busy throughout the book, and that, it would seem, can hardly be other than the person named as the author in i: 1, 4, 9, xxi: 2 and xxii: 8. (C.) Certain unusual words and forms occur and are frequently repeated, e. g., *ἄβυσσος* in chapters ix, xi, xvii, xx, *ἀδικεῖν* to hurt in ii, vi, vii, ix, xi, xxii, *βασανισμός* in ix, xiv, xviii, *διάδημα* in xii, xiii, xix, *δράκων* in xii, xiii, xvi, xx, *εὐαγγελίζειν* in x, xiv, *Θρόνος* in i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii, viii, xi, xii, xiii, xiv, xvi, xix, xx, xxi, xxii, *καῦμα* in vii, xvi, *κρύσταλλος* in iv, xxii, *μεγιστάν* in vi, xviii, *μεσουράνημα* in viii, xiv, xix, *μολύνειν* in iii, xiv, *οἰκουμένη* in iii, xii, xvi, *παντοκράτωρ* in i, iv, xi, xv, xvi, xix, xxi, *συνκοινωνεῖν —νός* in i, xviii, *σφάζειν* in v, vi, xiii, xviii, *φαρμακία, φάρμακον, φαρμακός* in ix, xviii, xxi, xxii, *φιάλη* in v, xv, xvi, xxi, *χάραγμα* in xiii, xiv, xvi, xix, xx. (D.) The number seven occurs very frequently throughout the book, e. g., seven churches i: 4, 11, 20, ii: 1, iii: 22, seven stars i: 16, 20, seven lamps i: 12, 20, iv: 5, seven seals v: 1, seven horns and seven eyes v: 6, seven spirits of God v: 6, seven angels and seven trumpets viii: 2, seven thunders x: 3, seven heads xiii: 1, seven angels having seven last plagues xv: 1, xvii: 1, xxi: 9, seven golden bowls xv: 7, xvii: 1, seven heads xvii: 3, 9, seven kings xvii: 10. Similarly but to a less degree the numbers three, ten, and twelve with their powers. (E.) There are many words and phrases that indicate a continuity of thought, e. g. "Before his throne" in i: 4 anticipates the vision in chap. iv. "After this I looked," in iv: 1 connects what follows with what precedes; "him that sat on the throne" in v: 1 shows that he still has in mind the throne and its occupant of chap. iv; similarly "the Lamb opened one of the seals" connects chap. vi with v: 6, 12; the throne, the elders, and the Lamb are still before him in vii: 9-17; in viii: 1 we find "the seventh seal" expanding into "the seven trumpets" but when the seventh trumpet is sounded in xi: 15 the twenty-four elders of iv: 4 are still prominent (vs. 16); it seems reasonable to believe that the phrase "in the heaven" of xii: 1 points to the same vision as the same phrase in iv: 1, in xiv: 3 the figures of the throne, beasts, and

elders of chap iv are still in plain view, thus showing that there is yet no break in the scene although it has been changing continually; the beast of xv: 2 seems to be the same as that of xiii: 1; the four beasts of xv: 7 are evidently the same as iv: 6; xvi: 2 and 10 shows that the features of xiii: 15-17 are still present; xvii: 1 shows that what follows is connected with xv: 6 and xvi: 1; Babylon of xvii: 5 appears to be the same as Babylon of xiv: 8 and xviii: 2 and xviii: 21; the beast of xix: 19 appears to be the same as that of xiii: 1ff and the false prophet of xix: 20 the same as the second beast of xiii: 11ff; the dragon of xx: 2 appears to be the one of xii: 3ff; xx: 10 connects us with xix: 20; xxi: 5 and xxii: 3 show us that the throne and its occupant of chap. iv are still in view; while xxii: 16 links the last sentences of the book with the first in i: 4. Many other points might be mentioned but these are surely enough to show that the narrative of the book is such as to stamp it as the work of one author. We may then say that throughout the book claims to be the work of one author, John, and that claim is strongly substantiated by the language and trend of thought of the book.

In view of these facts what must be our conclusion? To the mind of the present writer only one conclusion is reasonably possible,—that the book throughout in its present form is the work of one author. This does not exclude the probability that the author drew largely on the Old Testament and Jewish apocalypses for his material, nor the possibility of the book as we have it being a revision by a later hand than that of the original author, nor the possibility that some portions were written earlier than others. As for the supposed indications of dual or multiple authorship, they can be easily explained, though not fully or satisfactorily until the interpretation of the book as a unity has been reached. The fact that other prophetic and apocalyptic books are known to be of composite authorship would not be a reason for asserting positively that ours was of the same character though it would be a good reason for suspicion in the matter. The so-called breaks in the narrative are almost inevitable in a book of this sort and are to be explained, not as indicating different authorship, but as marking a transference of the author's attention from one feature to another of the continually changing scenes that he is describing. This

will appear more clearly in the exposition and explain as well the so-called repetitions. Surely the same author may view Christ and the Church from different angles and refer to events of different dates. It is hoped that careful reading of the exposition will convince the reader that this is the case.

VIII

ITS DESTINATION AND PURPOSE

The destination of the Revelation of John is clearly indicated in i: 4, 11 as the Christian churches in seven of the cities of the Roman Province of Asia, viz. Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. But there are some indications that the author had in mind a wider circle of readers as well. The expressions, "to show to his servants" in i: 1, "he that reads and they that hear" i: 3, "He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" ii: 7, 11, 17, 29, iii: 6, 13, 22, "to show to his servants" xxii: 6, "he who keeps the words" xxii: 7, "they that wash their robes" xxii: 14, "to testify to you these things for the churches" xxii: 16, "him that hears . . . is thirsty . . . one that will . . . everyone that hears," xxii: 17, 18, seem to point in this direction and to indicate that while primarily the churches named were the ones to which the book was addressed, he thought it might reach Christians in the province generally and even throughout the world. And this conclusion receives some confirmation when we study the reason for the selection of these particular seven churches.

The purpose of the book is plainly indicated in i: 1-3, "to show to his servants what must quickly come to pass." (Also xxii: 6). We note that with the exception of the first three verses the book is in the form of a letter, and really bears all the characteristics of a letter as letters were written in those days, indicating at the beginning who is the writer and to whom it is written (i: 4). It consists wholly of visions and revelations which he has seen and has been commanded (i: 11) with one exception (x: 4) to write in a book and send. While it is an apocalypse it is therefore an epistle also. In the first three chapters special reference is made to the internal condition of the churches in the seven cities mentioned, which were, no doubt, similar to those of the province generally. From the beginning of chap. iv to the end of the book it is the external circumstances that the church as a whole has to meet that are continually in view. When we consider these facts, and bear in mind the his-

torical circumstances we see that the author's real purpose is to strengthen the faith of the Christians and thus cheer them in their great struggle with the pagan and Imperial forces. He will let them know the real character of their opponents and assure them that in spite of their apparently despotic sway their downfall is certain, and right and truth and Christ will surely prevail. He must, however, write in a way that his enemies will not understand for if they did it would bring down more terrible sufferings than even those which they were otherwise called upon to endure. He therefore selects the apocalypse as the literary form best suited to his purpose; but this makes the work of the modern interpreter of the book especially difficult.

IX

ITS SYMBOLISM

Like other apocalyptic writings the Apocalypse of John abounds in imagery and numbers used in a symbolic way. Throughout the Old Testament symbols are frequently used and many of the symbols used by our author were evidently suggested by the Old Testament, though some are original and new. All departments of nature and life are drawn upon. Sometimes the imagery is not symbolism at all but is intended to give color to the scene; often when it is symbolic its meaning is so clear that it can scarcely be misunderstood, while in other cases there is room for considerable difference of opinion and the interpretation is uncertain.

Numbers occur very frequently in the book, 2, 3, 3½, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 24, 42, 144, 666 (or perhaps 616), 1,000, 1,260, 1,600, 7,000, 12,000, 144,000, 100,000,000, 200,000,000. Of these seven is by far the most frequent, then twelve, ten, and four occur often, and many of the larger numbers are multiples of them. The number seven to the Hebrew denoted completion, while ten is a round number, and three and a half is a broken seven. While a Hebrew origin is claimed for the symbolism of the Apocalypse we must also remember that pagan religion, literature, and art in Proconsular Asia in John's time were largely symbolic and that it may have been very desirable to provide the Church with a counteracting symbolism.

X

ITS CONTENTS AND PLAN

The Book of Revelation is really an apocalypse in the form of a letter, introduced by a few sentences which explains its origin and purpose in a way so striking that the reader's attention is at once arrested. In chap. i: 1-3 we have this introduction: while the remainder of the book is the letter.

In the letter we have the following well marked divisions. Following the time, place, and other circumstances we have an account of his first great vision,—a vision of Christ in the midst of the churches. Christ Himself is here the prominent figure, and He is represented as risen and glorified. The vision is partly explained to John who is smitten prostrate by its magnificence but is lifted up and told not to be afraid, but to write what he sees and send it to the seven churches of Asia which are named. A special message is sent to each church, indicating an exact knowledge of its nature and circumstances as well as a keen appreciation of its merits and defects coupled with such warnings and promises as are needful, and the vision passes.

At iv: 1 we have the beginning of the second great vision. He sees a door opened in the heaven and hears a trumpet voice summoning him to come up there and be shown things which must be hereafter. Again he is "in the spirit" and looks upon another matchless scene. The throne in heaven appears (chap. iv), and in the hand of its occupant a sealed roll (v: 1ff) which the Lamb undertakes to open (v: 5-14). The first six seals are opened (chap. vi), but before the seventh is opened 144,000 from the tribes of Israel are sealed (vii: 1-8) and an hymn of praise to God and the Lamb is sung (vii: 9-17) by a great multitude before the throne. Then the seventh seal is opened and the first four of seven trumpets sound (chap. viii: 1-13); the fifth brings the first woe (ix: 1-11) and the sixth the second woe (ix: 12-21), while the angel with the little book (x: 1-11), the measuring of the temple, and the episode of the two witnesses (chap. xi: 1-14) precede the sounding of the seventh trumpet or third woe (xi: 15-19). The narrative proceeds to

recount the appearances of a woman and her child and the attack of a great red dragon on her (xii), the two beasts (xiii), the appearance of the 144,000 (xiv: 1-5), the flying angels (xiv: 6-13) with the harvest and vintage scenes (xiv: 14-20). Then follow the seven bowls (xv and xvi), Babylon seated on the beast (xvii) and her doom (xviii), after which we have the celebrations of triumph and praise of the people of God (xix: 1-10). Then there are the descriptions of the crowned warrior, a great battle, and the feast of the slain, (xix: 11-21). In chap. xx we are told of the binding of Satan, the millennium, the two resurrections, the final conflict and judgment (xx), while in xxi and xxii we have the new heaven and the new earth, the holy city, and the paradise of God (xxi: 1—xxii: 5). The book closes with an epilogue and benediction (xxii: 6-21).

This may be tabulated as follows:

I. The Preface; chap. i: 1-3.
II. The General Introduction; chap. i: 4-8.
III. The First Vision; chap. i: 9—iii: 22.
  1. Christ in the midst of the churches; chap. i: 9-20.
  2. The messages to the seven churches; chap. ii: 1—iii: 22.
IV. The Second Vision; chap. iv: 1—xxii: 5.
  1. The throne in heaven; chap. iv: 1-11.
  2. The sealed book and the Lamb; chap. v: 1-14.
  3. The opening of the seals; chap. vi: 1—viii: 1.
    A. The opening of the first six seals; chap. vi: 1-17.
    B. Sealing of 144,000; chap. vii: 1-17.
    C. The opening of the seventh seal; chap. viii: 1.
  4. The seven trumpets; chap. viii: 2—xi: 19.
    A. The first four trumpets; chap. viii: 2-13.
    B. The fifth trumpet or first woe; chap. ix: 1-12.
    C. The sixth trumpet or second woe; chap. ix: 13—xi: 14.
      (1) The first stage of the woe; chap. ix: 13-21.
      (2) The angel with the little book; chap. x: 1-11.
      (3) Measuring the temple; chap. xi: 1-3.
      (4) The two witnesses; chap. xi: 4-13.
    D. The seventh trumpet or third woe; chap. xi: 14-19.
  5. The hideous monsters; chap. xii: 1—xiii: 18.
    A. The woman and the dragon; chap. xii: 1-17.

B. The first beast from the sea; chap. xiii: 1-10.
C. The second beast from the land; chap. xiii: 11-18.
6. The great ingathering; chap. xiv: 1-20.
A. The Lamb and his company on Mount Zion; vs. 1-5.
B. The angel with the gospel; vs. 6 and 7.
C. Announcement of Babylon's fall; vs. 8-11.
D. Blessedness of the saints; vs. 12 and 13.
E. The reaper and his work; vs. 14-20.
7. The time of judgment; chap. xv: 1—xx: 15.
A. The seven last plagues; chap. xv: 1—xvi: 21.
B. The judgment of Babylon; chap. xvii: 1—xviii: 24.
C. The thanksgiving to God; chap. xix: 1-10.
D. The victor and the slain; chap. xix: 11-21.
E. Final conflicts and victories; chap. xx: 1-15.
8. The bliss at last; chap. xxi: 1—xxii: 5.
A. The new Jerusalem; chap. xxi: 1-27.
B. The paradise of God; chap. xxii: 1-5.
V. The General Conclusion; chap. xxii: 6-20.
VI. Benediction; chap. xxii: 21.

XI

ITS INTERPRETATION

The interpretation of the Book of Revelation has proved to be a task of great difficulty. Almost from the first it has received the attention of students of the New Testament, but the results of the study given it by scholars have varied widely both in detail and in principle. This section will indicate the view taken by the writer and the lines which he believes should be pursued in the detailed interpretation of the book. While no one will dispute that all the established principles of New Testament interpretation ought to be followed faithfully unless good and sufficient reason can be shown for disregarding them, yet in a book of the nature of the Apocalypse of John special attention ought to be given to the following points because they have been so often neglected:

1. Due consideration must be given to the literary character of the book. We must always remember that it is an apocalypse and therefore must be interpreted as an apocalypse, in as much as it uses the language and symbols of apocalyptic literature and possesses the same general characteristics. A careful study of the non-canonical Christian and Jewish apocalypses of the period to which the author belongs, and especially of the other apocalyptic portions of the Bible (of which the Book of Daniel is the chief) will be of considerable assistance to us and some attention has been given to them in an earlier section of this Introduction. But we must at the same time distinguish between the real message of the book and the form in which that message is conveyed, and remember that phrases and imagery of the apocalyptic type may be no more than the scenery of the picture conveying the real message.

2. Then we must always keep in mind the position and purpose of the writer of the book and the circumstances of those to whom it was written. The book arose in clearly defined historical circumstances and it is surely as foolish to try to understand its meaning without a knowledge of those as it would be to try to understand the words of Jesus or the Epistles of Paul without a knowledge of the situation in which they arose,

and no one tries to do this with parts of the Scripture which arose in well known circumstances. Why then should it be done with those parts the historical surroundings of the origin of which we do not know? Surely it is better to assume that they arose to meet a particular need, and that they can be rightly understood in the first instance only in their relation to those surroundings, than it is to assume that they had no bearing on the circumstances of their time but were designed by their authors to map out the distant future or supply the spiritual needs of the people of some remote age. The Book of Revelation is in the form of a letter to seven definite local churches in Asia Minor, the conditions and circumstances of which it gives with considerable detail in its opening chapters. We must conclude then, both on general principles and on the evidence in this particular instance, that the book is an answer to the great need of the Christian churches to which it is addressed. When our author lifts the veil of the future, it is for the purpose of arousing his readers to trust in God, be faithful to Christ, have confidence in the ultimate triumph of righteousness, be patient in their severe trials, and be hopeful in the prospect of death, and not to predict the medieval and modern history of Europe.

3. It must be remembered, too, that in a book of this sort, plainly so difficult, much weight should be given to every clear indication which it contains as to its own meaning. In our volume these indications are quite numerous. The writer claims to be divinely commissioned to convey a revelation to the churches (chap. i: 1-3, 11, 18). Its purpose is plainly indicated (i: 1, 3, xxii; 16). The meaning of the seven stars and the seven lamps is explained in i: 20; of those arrayed in white robes in vii: 14; the number of the beast is explained as the number of a man in xiii: 18; in xiv: 8 Babylon is called a great city; in xvi: 13, 14, the three unclean spirits like frogs are declared to be the spirits of devils; the mystery of the woman and the beast that carries her is explained in xvii: 7ff; other explanations or interpretations are given in iv: 5, v: 8, xx: 5, 14, xxi: 8.

4. Nor must we overlook in this connection the importance of a wise use of literary criticism. Such questions as the proper determination of the correct text of the book, the source of the author's material, (i. e., whether his own production or ob-

tained in the Old Testament or elsewhere), and if not his own production is his use of it the same as its original significance. These and similar questions are not often considered in the following pages, but are discussed only when the occasion particularly requires it. In the case of the text reliance is chiefly placed on the work of others, while in the case of the material, it is often very difficult to determine its source, and even when that can be determined it is of little value as our author exhibits complete independence in its use.

5. Light and assistance from any and every source should be welcomed. Here we are particularly indebted to the archaeologist and the historical investigator for such help, Sir Wm. Ramsay being entitled to special mention in this connection.

6. Believing then, that our author and his volume are what they claim to be, and that the book before us must be interpreted in the light of the circumstances and purpose of its author as therein indicated, we have a clear indication of a system of interpretation which in recent years has been growing in favor with students of the Bible, and in the case of the Apocalypse of John offers the only reasonable hope of a satisfactory interpretation of the book. An interpretation conducted on these lines will be distinct from all the chief systems of apocalyptic interpretation though with each of them it will have points of contact.

Bearing in mind, then, that the book is a letter in the form of an apocalypse, written and sent by John who is in exile in Patmos, to his fellow Christians in the Roman province of Asia, and remembering that it is designed to encourage and strengthen them to meet a great trial of faith, we proceed to our task of considering it in detail.

PART II

EXPOSITION

I

Preface i: 1-3.

Here the following points are worthy of note:

1. The title of the book is "The Revelation of John." (*Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰωάννου*, or *Ἰωάνου*), or using the transliterated Greek word, "Apocalypse of John," occurring also in the opening verse. The title thus indicates the nature of the book and connects it with the class of literature to which it properly belongs. This title goes back to the second century, though not belonging to the book in its earliest form; and although the author calls it, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," (i: 1) the consensus of Christian sentiment after his day kept his name in the title and as time passed two other epithets, "saint" and "divine" were added until the title became as in our Authorized Version "The Revelation of Saint John the Divine."

2. The source of the book is given clearly and in detail "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him . . . and he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John." Here we learn:

A. The real and ultimate source of the book is God.

B. It is a revelation "of Jesus Christ." Does this mean that Jesus Christ is the one who is revealed or the one to whom the revelation is given? When we remember that the book exalts and glorifies Jesus throughout, we are constrained to believe that the words mean that He is the one who is revealed; while the next words, "which God gave to Him," certainly indicate that He is the recipient of the revelation. Probably the truth is to be found in a union of both views. A parallel case is found in John xvii: 24 where Jesus refers to His glory as given Him by God. It is as if God draws the veil and allows Christ Himself to appear.

C. The revelation is effected through the instrumentality of an angel who is later mentioned. (xxii: 8).

D. But John is the human source through which it comes, and humanly speaking is its author, bearing testimony to it in the words, spoken in the third person, "who bore witness of the

word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, of as many things as he saw." In these words the phrases "word of God," "testimony of Jesus Christ," and "as many things as he saw," (ὅσα εἶδεν), may be understood either as different designations of the revelation contained in his book generally, or more exactly, as that revelation viewed as coming from God, Christ, or himself. However, there are some interpreters, such as Dr. Hort, who regard the words as referring to John's confession of Jesus Christ before men and not to the visions of the Apocalypse.

3. The purpose of the book is indicated as well "To show unto his servants what must quickly come to pass." The revelation is for the benefit of the people of God, and concerns the immediate, not the distant future. These words and similar expressions in vs. 3 and xxii: 6, 7, 10, completely exclude all interpretations of the book based on the idea that it primarily refers to the distant future.

4. Emphasis is laid on the importance of close attention to the information the book contains, on the part of its readers and hearers, "Blessed is he that reads and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things written therein, for the time is at hand." The singular "he that reads," and the plural, "they that hear," indicate that the author has not so much in mind the private student, as one who reads aloud in the congregation. Here too, the author indicates his own opinion of the book. It is a "prophecy," and therefore worthy to be classed with the works of the Hebrew prophets and as worthy of the attention of the servants of God as they.

II

General Introduction i: 4-8.

Here we have,

1. The customary form for beginning a letter.

A. The Apocalypse is from this point on really a letter.

B. Its author is John who here again mentions himself as such.

C. Its destination is indicated,—the seven churches which are in the Roman province of Asia: these are named in i: 11.

2. The address passes into a benediction.

A. Grace and peace are invoked on them.

B. This is from "him who was and is and is to come," which can mean only God the Father as distinct from the Son and the Spirit since both are mentioned separately in the same sentence. This description of God would be acceptable to the ears of both Greek and Jewish Christians.

C. The grace and peace are conveyed also "from the seven spirits which are before his throne." These seven spirits are again mentioned in iii: 1, iv: 5, and v: 6, and seem clearly to be the Spirit of God, sevenfold because He operates in the seven churches, as well as because the author has a fondness for this number and because this will add to the apocalyptic coloring of the book.

D. This benediction comes as well from Jesus Christ who may be regarded as the source of the revelation by virtue of His unity with the Father, and as the communicator of it to His people because having received it from God. He is described as the "faithful witness," the author no doubt having in mind such representations of Him as we find in John iii: 11, 32f, viii: 14f, xviii: 37, 1 Tim. vi: 13. He is also the "first-born of the dead," i. e., the first person to rise from the dead never to die again (vs. 18). Because He has risen from the dead He is "the prince of the kings of the earth." Here compare chap. xix: 12, 16 and Rom. xiv: 9, Col. i: 18.

3. The benediction passes into a doxology, which is the first of many doxologies in the book.

A. "To Him who loves us." At the beginning the author

will assure his readers of Christ's personal affection for them (see also iii: 9, 19).

B. "And loosed us from our sins by His blood." Here it is doubtful whether we should have *washed* or *loosed,* as in the original there is a difference of only one letter between them (λούσαντι, washed; λύσαντι, loosed). Either makes good sense and seems to suit well, though probably *loosed* is on the whole preferable as it has the better manuscript authority.

C. "And made us a kingdom, priests to God and his father." Here the manuscripts favor "kingdom" followed by a comma, rather than "kings" (cf. vs. 9). Our book is, from one point of view, a protest against the Roman Empire especially in its attitude toward the Church, and here at the outset we find the author placing the Divine Kingdom in sharp contrast to the political power. But while the members of the church in their corporate capacity are a spiritual kingdom, in their individual capacity they are priests unto God, and offer Him worship and service.

D. "To him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever; amen." Here glory (δόξα) and dominion (κράτος) are ascribed to Christ. Thus the doxology exalts Christ because of the love, redeeming grace, and uplifting power, which He has extended to the Church, ascribing to Him glory and dominion, all of which it emphasizes by the addition of the word "Amen."

4. To the doxology is added the declaration of His speedy coming doubly emphasized, vs. 7. He is coming, surrounded by clouds; all shall see Him, even those who put Him to death, (cf. Dan. vii: 13 and Zech. xii: 10). The Greek indicates that by "they (οἵτινες) who pierced him," is meant not so much those who shared in the actual crucifixion of Christ as those who in all ages are hostile to Him. "All the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him"—doubtless the mourning of repentance rather than of punishment on themselves as "every eye" and "all the tribes" must include many who would welcome Him gladly without fear. The declaration of His coming is doubly emphasized, "Even so, amen" (ναί, ἀμήν), the former being Greek in its origin and the latter Hebrew: the latter also has a religious character from its association which the former does not possess.

5. In verse 8 we have a declaration of the Divine nature

given by Himself. He is; A. "Alpha and Omega." These are respectively the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet and thus express the infinitude of God, which embraces and transcends all, for the first and the last include all between. B. The One "who is and who was, and who is to come," i. e., the eternal, and, C. "the Almighty," i. e., the omnipotent.

III

Christ in the Midst of the Churches i: 9—iii: 22.

We come now to consider the first of the two great visions that chiefly make up our book,—Christ in the Midst of the Churches i: 9—iii: 22. This vision naturally falls into two parts, A. the narrative, and B. the messages.

In the first part the following points are to be noted.

1. Vs. 9-11 give us more details regarding the author and his circumstances when he received the revelations contained in his book.

A. His name is John as he has already twice (vs. 1 and 4) indicated; but now it is mentioned in the first person instead of in the third as before.

B. He claims to be one of themselves describing himself as "your brother" and claiming to share with them in the suffering, kingdom, and patience of Jesus. Thus although honored with a revelation from Christ and divinely appointed as the messenger to convey it to his fellow-Christians he assumes no exalted position but considers himself as one of them.

C. The revelation came to him in the island called Patmos. This is a small island shaped roughly like a horse's head and neck. It is about 10 miles long north and south and 6 wide at the north end. It lies some 40 miles southwest by west from Miletus. The island was once populous and prosperous but under Turkish rule it has greatly decreased in importance. The chief feature of the modern island is the monastery of St. John built in 1088 A. D. near the southern end and a cave not far from it which is pointed out as the exact spot where John received his revelation. The hills on the island rise to a height of about 800 feet and the natural scenery may have had some influence in determining the external features of John's visions.

D. The tense of the verb, "was" (ἐγενόμην) apparently indicates that the visions were committed to writing after John had left Patmos and some time after they had come to him but while they were still fresh in his memory.

E. He was there "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." This may mean that he went there to preach the gospel,

but the whole tone and purpose of the book is against such a view. It is more probable that it means that he was sent there as an exile or prisoner because of his preaching; this view is the more probable because (1) the same Greek preposition (διὰ) is used in the same way and certainly in this sense in vi: 9 and xx: 4; and because (2) the expression "in the tribulation" in vs. 9 indicates that John had suffered in a common trouble; while (3) an almost unanimous tradition going back to the times of Tertullian and Clement gives this as the reason why he was there.

F. The vision came when he was "in the spirit," by which he may mean an exstatic condition, as a prophet under the spell of divine inspiration (cf. Acts xxii: 17, Ezek. iii: 12, 14 and xxxvii: 1), or a specially receptive spiritual mood; the former is more in accord with the extraordinary figures of the book but less tenable if it is held that the apocalyptic form of the book is simply the form the author has chosen to convey the prophetic message to his fellow-sufferers.

G. The revelations came to him "on the Lord's day," (ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρα). Several views may be held as to the day actually meant here, (1) Easter, the great day annually observed in commemoration of the Resurrection, (2) The seventh day of the week, (3) The day of Judgment as in Joel i: 15 and iii: 14, (4) The first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath; and although nowhere else in the New Testament is this phrase used to designate that day yet we find the adjective used in exactly the same way in 1 Cor. xi: 20 and later in the Didache and early in the history of the Church the first day of the week came to be called by this name. This is the most reasonable interpretation. There is little to commend the third and less to support the first and second.

H. In these circumstances he suddenly hears behind him a trumpet-toned voice commanding him to record what he sees in a book and send it to the churches in seven cities that are named. Thus the seer is charged with the responsibility of conveying the revelation to others as well as of profiting by it himself.

2. The vision itself is recounted in verses 12-19. John turns about to see who speaks to him, and a remarkable sight meets his view. Seven golden lamps surround a person, in every way extraordinary, whom he describes as "like a son of man." From

his mouth a sharp sword proceeds and in his right hand he holds seven stars. At the sight of him John falls prostrate, but the personage lays his right hand on John and bids him not to fear, tells him who he is himself, and repeats the command to write not only what he sees, as before, but also the things that are, and the things that shall come to pass. Many of the words and phrases in these verses are closely akin to the Old Testament. Regarding the seven golden lamps cf. 1 Kings vii: 49, Zech. iv: 2, also 1 Macc. iv: 49f and 2 Macc. i: 8 and x: 3. Regarding the form "like a son of man" (also in xiv: 14) cf. Dan. vii: 13, x: 6, Ezek. i: 7, xliii: 2. The exact meaning of the word χαλκολιβάνῳ, translated "fine brass," is doubtful, as is also its derivation, but a precious metal, or perhaps mixture of metals, bright and flashing, best fills all the requirements and suits the context well. The roar of the Aegean sea may have been in John's ears when he compared the voice to the sound of many waters. As to the sword proceeding from his mouth cf. Ps. cxlix: 6, Isa. xi: 4, xlix: 2, and see Eph. vi: 17, Heb. iv: 12. The shining countenance recalls the Transfiguration (Matt. xvii: 2); there is also a parallel in Slav. Enoch i: 5 where we read that "their faces shone as the sun." Regarding his falling prostrate see Isa. vi: 5, Ezek. i: 28, Dan. viii: 17 and x: 8ff, Luke v: 8. For "I am the first . . . ever," see Isa. xliv: 6 and xlviii: 12; frequently in both Old and New Testaments God is spoken of as "living" especially in Deut. xxxii: 40, Dan. xii: 7, John v: 26. Regarding "the keys of death and Hades," Ps. ix: 13, cvii: 18, Isa. xxxviii: 10, Job xxxviii: 17, Matt. xvi: 19. In verse 19 the command of vs. 11 is repeated with some additional details.

3. In vs. 20 we have a partial interpretation of this vision, where two of the three objects that need interpretation are explained.

First. The seven lamps are declared to be the seven churches; that is the seven named in vs. 11 as is clear from ii: 5 also, each apparently represents a particular church of the seven.

Second. The seven stars are declared to be the angels of the seven churches, doubtless also each representing a particular church of the seven. For the significance of "angel" in this connection see the general note preceding the discussion of the letters to the seven churches.

Third. Only one interpretation of the Personage of the

vision is possible. The world has seen but One who could truthfully describe Himself as the first and the last, the living One who was dead and is alive for ever, and that one is Christ. This would be so plain to a Christian of that day that it would hardly need to be stated, especially as the resurrection of Christ was the great theme in the preaching of the early church. His clothing, and especially His golden girdle around His breast, suggests priestly and kingly excellence; (Ex. xxviii: 4ff, xxix: 5). His head and hair are suitable to a person of His rank, the intelligence and penetration expressed in His face and eyes are especially noticeable, the feet of brass indicate strength and stability, while even His voice and words are powerful like the waters and penetrating like the sword. As the short Roman sword was tongue-like in shape the figure of the sword proceeding from His mouth is not so strange as would at first appear; it may be taken with the rest of the description of Him as indicating, in this passage, a great contrast to, and superiority over the Roman power, having authority not only over life and death, but over the realm beyond as well.

Thus we have a vision of Christ in the midst of the churches. Why then should they fear. The One to whom they look is among them and He is supreme and one with God. No evil results of the past, no terrors of the present, no forebodings of the future need alarm those who took Him for their King and Lord. His power and authority are superior to those of Rome, even to those of death itself. He speaks to them through John bidding them not to be afraid even as in the days of His flesh He had done, and as He speaks it is with the sympathy of one who has experienced trials and hardships even greater than theirs, for He was dead. Thus there is in the vision an indication of the power, majesty, and sympathy of Jesus who is now glorified.

IV

The Messages to the Seven Churches.

Before proceeding to discuss in detail the letters to the seven churches some general questions regarding them, must be considered.

1. The Churches themselves. In i: 11 we have the noteworthy words "What you see write in a book and send to the seven churches, unto Ephesus, etc." The expression "the seven churches," seems plainly to indicate that in John's mind the churches in the cities mentioned formed a well-known and clearly defined group which included these and no others. How did this come to be so? It cannot be that only these seven churches existed there. A decade, or even more before the earliest date that has been suggested for the Apocalypse there were churches in Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col. iv: 13, 16), and Troas (2 Cor. ii: 12, Acts xx: 6ff). Even earlier than that, the Gospel had spread so rapidly that it could be said that "all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word" (Acts xix: 10). Further, in the time of Ignatius (about 100 A. D.) there were churches at Magnesia and Tralleis. Probably many other places also had churches, e. g. Cyzicus, an important city in the north. Thus we see that there must have been many more than these seven churches in the province. How is it that these seven only are mentioned, and mentioned in a way that indicates that they formed a recognized group? It could not have been that these were the most important cities of the province as Thyatira and Philadelphia were insignificant in comparison with some like Cyzicus, Alabanda and Apameia, which are not mentioned at all. Professor Sir Wm. Ramsay, probably the most eminent living authority on early Christianity in Asia Minor, believes there were several reasons:

First, each of the seven came to be recognized as the centre and representative church in a group, and he points to Col. iv: 13 and 16 as indicating such a group so closely related that a letter addressed to one could be used with advantage by the others. Thus, Dr. Ramsay believes, seven groups arose of which the seven churches mentioned were severally the leaders and representatives.

Second, he points out that these seven were so situated that a messenger could visit them all by pursuing the great roads of the province and make a convenient circuit. A messenger from Patmos would land at Ephesus from which he would journey northward to Smyrna and thence to Pergamum along the great road that traversed the country as far as Cyzicus on the Propontis. From Pergamum he would turn eastward along a second great road that led into the interior of the country, and following it in a southeasterly direction he would call at Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. From Ephesus another great road led eastward along the valley of the Meander and Lycus rivers to the distant parts of Phrygia, by which, journeying westward from Laodicea the messenger would reach Ephesus. Here the order in which the cities are mentioned indicates the order in which the messenger would reach them and the route he would follow. As the messenger reached each of the seven cities he would leave a copy of the book, where provision would be made for circulating it among the churches in the vicinity.

Third, these churches were representative in two ways. Each stood as the centre of a group of churches; and each had its peculiar features and exhibited in a marked degree some feature of all the churches of Asia Minor. Thus the epistles to the seven churches all apply to all the churches of the whole country but each letter has an especial value for the church to which it is addressed. The messenger on his circular journey would pass through Hierapolis, Tralleis, and Magnesia, at all of which it is altogether probable there were churches, and these cities were certainly more wealthy than Philadelphia and Thyatira. But the churches in these would be served by messengers of secondary circuits having the seven cities mentioned in i: 4, 11 as their centres. Thus Dr. Ramsay thinks these seven churches became representative of the whole church in the province, and he further believes that the church in Asia is representative of the Church in the world. Certainly the words "to show to his servants" in i: 1 and xxii: 6, "he that reads and they that hear . . . and keep" in i: 3, "what the spirit says to the churches" in ii: 7, 11, 17, 29, iii: 6, 13, 22, "he who keeps" in xxii: 7, "those who keep the words" in xxii: 9, "each one" in xxii: 12, "they that wash their robes" in xxii: 14, "for

the churches" in xxii: 16, the remarkably broad invitation of xxii: 17, "every one" "any one" in xxii: 18, 19, are sufficiently inclusive to take in all the people of all the churches of Asia and the world.

Fourth, this explanation by Dr. Ramsay is by far the most reasonable that has ever been given on this point, and when we add to it the fact that the book before us is an apocalypse and that the writer manifestly desires to suggest both mystery and completeness by the language, we have what appears to be sufficient reason for the choice of these particular seven churches.

2. The Letters to the Seven Churches. While the Apocalypse as a whole from i: 4 onwards is in the form of a letter yet we find the epistolary form specially used in chapters ii and iii where we have the letters to the seven churches, written, as John tells us in i: 4, 5, 11, at the express command of Christ who is now risen and glorified. The letters are in some ways very much alike, and in others quite different.

The letters are all built on the same plan. Each one begins with the expression "To the angel of the church in . . . write; These things says . . . " followed by a partial description of the glorified Christ as pictured in the first chapter, so that all the partial descriptions at the beginnings of the letters make up with some additions (especially in the last two letters) the complete description of Him previously given. The letters are all very short; each one deals with the condition and circumstances of the particular church to which it is addressed, and all close in the same way with a promise to the overcomer and an appeal for attention. They are all written from a single inspirational impulse, and although each is addressed to its particular church and written as much for it as if the others did not exist, it is evident from the direction given to John that all the letters will go to all the churches,—"What you see write in a book and send to the seven churches,"—one book containing all seven letters, to be sent to all seven churches and this is confirmed by the plural, *"churches,"* in the concluding appeal in each letter.

But into this common framework, so skilfully and beautifully fashioned, John is able to put an individual message to each church pre-eminently suited to its own particular case. Each letter shows a very close knowledge on the part of its author

of the church to which it is written, and of the historical, geographical, political, and religious circumstances of the city to which it belongs, and a remarkable facility in using this information for the spiritual instruction of the church to which he writes. This will be brought out more clearly as we study the letters separately. Probably it is only the poverty of our knowledge of these seven cities that prevents us from seeing even more references to their individual circumstances than we have been able so far to discover. It is chiefly to the painstaking efforts of Sir Wm. Ramsay that interpreters of these chapters are indebted for such knowledge of the seven cities as we possess and his splendid volume "The Letters to the Seven Churches" will bring him the lasting gratitude of all students of this portion of the Apocalypse.

3. The Angels of the Churches. What are we to understand by these? The word ἄγγελοι might be translated "messengers" equally as well as "angels;" (see Matt. xi: 10, Luke vii: 24, Luke ix: 52, Jas. ii: 25, where the same word is used and certainly means human messengers). If this is the sense here the "angels" would be messengers, possibly elders or bishops of the Asian churches perhaps sent to John in Patmos. But this is hardly allowable here as, A. no human ruler or messenger could be so closely identified with a congregation as to merit praise and blame for its condition to the extent of these angels of the seven churches, and B., as Dr. H. B. Swete points out, this is foreign to the use of the word elsewhere in our book where it occurs more than sixty times exclusive of the times it is followed by the phrase "of the church" (τῆς ἐκκλησίας) or "of the churches," (τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν), and always means a superhuman being employed in the service of God or Satan.

Professor Ramsay thinks "the angel of the church" seems to embody and gather together in a personification the powers, the character, the history and life and unity of the church. The angel represents the Divine presence and the Divine power in the church; he is the Divine guarantee of the vitality and effectiveness of the church. When it is asked how the angel can be so closely identified with the church as to be blamed for its defects Dr. Ramsay answers, first, that John here inevitably fails to carry out fully the symbolism, and second, that it is "vain to attempt to give a rigidly accurate definition of the

meaning which is attached to the term 'angel' in these chapters. All that concerns the angels is vague, impalpable, elusive, defying analysis and scientific precision. You cannot tell where in the Seven Letters taken one by one, the idea 'angel' drops and the idea 'Church' takes its place." (Letters to the Seven Churches, ch. vi).

For the purposes of practical interpretation we may regard the angel of the church as simply an expression for the prevailing spirit of the church, or a personification of the church, and thus consider it as the church itself.

V

The Letter to the Church in Ephesus, ii: 1-7.

Ephesus in the first century A. D. was one of the three most important cities of the eastern Mediterranean region, (the other two being Antioch in Syria and Alexandria in Egypt). It was situated on the sea coast at the mouth of the river Cayster and would be the first of the seven cities to be reached by the messenger from Patmos. Its position commercially was one of great importance as the great trade route from the east terminated there. Also its political importance was great as the governors of the province landed there on their arrival. It was a *"libera urbs,"* (free city) with its own βουλή (Council), γερουσία (Senate), and ἐκκλησία (Assembly), the head of a Conventus (assize town), and a seat of proconsular government (Acts xix: 38). Religiously it was a city of great importance. Its chief deity was the goddess Diana, (or Artemis), whose temple was unequalled in Asia for size and magnificence, and to which people from all parts of Asia Minor came to worship, bringing much trade and money to the city as many articles used in the worship of Diana were made there and sold to them. Nor was the Imperial religion neglected. A shrine and a great altar of Augustus were placed in the temple of Diana in the earlier years of his reign, and later provincial temples of the Imperial religion were built, one under Claudius or Nero, a second under Hadrian, and a third under Severus. The city was proud of the honor as the "Warden" (νεωκόρος) of the temples of Diana and of these three emperors and sometimes even styled itself, "four times temple-warden." In Ephesus art, philosophy, literature, and the theatre flourished. But according to Dr. Ramsay the most outstanding characteristic of the city was its continual change, as he says it experienced more vicissitudes than any other city of Asia. Its harbor was steadily filling up with the silt brought down by the river so that the city seemed to be steadily moving inland, and thus even its natural surroundings were in a state of transition. Its site was several times changed and its political fortunes were much varied in the passage of time. So much has it declined since the time of Paul and John that it is now insignificant.

The Apostle Paul visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey but his visit was of very short duration, (Acts xviii: 19f). Some time afterward, on the third missionary journey, he again visited the city and remained two years or more there (Acts xix: 1ff) and so rapidly did the gospel spread that "all those dwelling in Asia heard the word of God." His work there seems to have been carried on by Timothy after his departure (1 Tim. i: 3). After Paul's death and Timothy's departure the tradition of the second century declares that St. John continued the work there.

1. The introduction to the letter is one which we readily notice to be specially suitable to the Ephesian church.

A. The letter to it is placed first as the messenger from Patmos would reach it first and because it was on the whole the most important city of the province.

B. The Author is the one "who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps." This is specially suitable. It recognizes that as Ephesus is the chief city it stands in a way for all the cities and the province and thus the church there is addressed by Christ as He stands in His relation to all the churches. If Ephesus is superior to, and in a sense representative of all the cities of Asia, Christ is superior to and over all the churches of Asia likewise, which are as inferior to Him and as much subject to His power and authority as the lamps and stars are to Him in the vision.

2. Christ recognizes in the church at Ephesus much that is good and praiseworthy, (vs. 2, 3, 6). He knew their work and labor and patience. No faithful effort on their part, for the Master's sake, no hardship uncomplainingly endured, no time of waiting cheerfully borne, escaped His watchful eye. Their patient endurance and strenuous toil for Him are so very plain to the One who moves in the midst of the seven golden lamps that it is emphasized by the third verse, which is little more than a repetition of what has been said in the former half of the second. He also took note of and appreciated their abhorrence of evil, and their care in testing those who came to them pretending to be apostles when they were really not so. The young churches were continually visited by those who claimed to be apostles and prophets of Christ, and they needed to be always on their guard against the intrusion of false teachers and false doctrine, and especially as there was yet no es-

tablished standard of Christian faith and practice. In the epistle of Ignatius written to this church a few years later we have strong testimony to their intolerance of evil, their faithfulness in avoiding it, and their high Christian grace. Their hatred of evil was especially exercised toward the works of the Nicolaitanes. Of this sect we know very little. As their doctrines are associated in vs. 14 and 15 with those of "Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication," we may conclude that they were an antinomian sect who abused the doctrine of Gentile liberty from the Mosaic Law taught by St. Paul. That such a sect really existed is clearly established by many references to them in later writings. Irenaeus (Adv. Haer. i: 26) says they lived "lives of unrestrained indulgence," teaching that adultery and eating things sacrificed to idols are matters of indifference. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Ignatius refer to them in language of the same sort, showing that they sanctioned moral impurity. In matters of doctrine they seem to have maintained well known Gnostic errors according to the writings of Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus. This sect is mentioned in the letter to the church in Pergamum (ii: 15) and perhaps also in the letter to the church in Thyatira (ii: 20ff). This would suggest that its doctrine was widely prevalent and dangerous to the faith.

3. Their estate, however is not one that merits unmixed praise, for their pristine love for Christ has cooled (vs. 4). If the loyalty and activity of the church have been well maintained there has been a falling off in the greatest of Christian gifts. The inner fire had burned low, and their intense enthusiasm in the days of Paul had vanished (see Acts xix: 20, xx: 37).

4. A call to repentance is given them in vs. 5. Their first duty is to remember from whence they have fallen, and recall to their minds in a clear way their former and much better condition. When this is done they must "repent"—adopt a complete change of attitude, and begin over again,—"do the first works," though they are not told to love with the same love. A complete series of three stages is put before them, remember, repent, do.

5. A warning is given them that they will lose their place as a church if they fail to repent. Ephesus was a city of change,

and in spite of its present greatness as a city its actual location had several times been altered. Natural conditions also were changing there. The river was slowly but steadily filling the harbor so that soon the city became almost an inland town, and its proud position waned. Christ would not tolerate indefinitely a church that was steadily losing its devotion to Him.

6. This warning is strengthened by a ringing appeal for close and attentive consideration extended in exactly the same words to each one of the seven churches, "He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

7. The letter closes with a promise to the overcomer,—"to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." While all the seven letters have promises to the overcomer, no two are the same. Trees had been worshipped from time immemorial as the home of the divine nature and power, and the figure was familiar both to Jew and Greek. On some sacred tree the safety of a family or tribe or city was often thought to depend. The people of Athens knew that the safety of their state was assured when the sacred olive tree on the Acropolis put forth a new shoot after the city had been burned by the Persians. In the holy tree the divine life was thought to come close to man and he who could eat of the fruit of the tree of life was receiving the strength of God's nature and power. As Diana the Ephesian goddess was looked upon as the fruitful mother of all vegetable, animal, and human life as well as the source of their reproductive power, the personification of the principle of vitality, the appropriateness of this promise to the overcomer is evident. Gen. iii: 22-24 may also be in the mind of the seer.

VI

The Letter to the Church in Smyrna, ii: 8-11.

Going northward from Ephesus along the great road for a distance of about 35 miles the messenger from Patmos would reach Smyrna. This was a city of great beauty and this feature, with the eminence of the city in other ways, led to its calling itself τὸ τῆς Ἀσίας ἄγαλμα (the Pride of Asia). Its beauty consisted in its natural surroundings, its fine paved streets, the squares in which the city was laid out, and a fine hill at the extreme end of its principal street, rising to some 460 feet in height called "Pagos" and crowned with castles and towers. This hill with its castle, battlements, and towers made a splendid acropolis for the city and was often referred to as its "Crown." Commercially the city was almost the equal of Ephesus. Not only had it the trade of the rich Hermus valley but it was the terminus of a great road which led far inland, while its situation at the head of a long gulf or inlet gave it prominence as a shipping town. It had two harbors, the inner and smaller of which is now filled up and has become the scene of its bazaars.

Politically from the distant past Smyrna was loyal to Rome and in this loyalty her citizens found much pride. In 195 B. C. Smyrna built a temple and instituted a worship of Rome. A century later when a Roman army was suffering great distress in the war against Mithradates the citizens of Smyrna stripped off their own clothes to send to the shivering troops. In A. D. 23 permission was given to the Commune of Asia to erect a temple to Tiberias and his mother Julia Augustus, and three years later Smyrna was chosen as its location over all other cities in the province because of the faithfulness and loyalty of the city to her powerful ally. Thus the city secured the much prized honor of being Temple-warden.

Smyrna above all else was a city of enduring and abounding life. With a history going back to the remote past, a continuity and a freedom from vicissitude secured chiefly by its relationship to the Imperial power, it retained through the centuries a remarkable vigor. The city has suffered much from earthquakes, but after each has arisen more beautiful than before.

It is the only ancient city of Asia Minor that continues to this day a place of importance. Its present population is given at approximately 250,000 of which according to Dr. Ramsay, three quarters are said to be Christians, a fact which no doubt accounts for its continuous prosperity, and the name "Infidel Smyrna" given it by the Turks.

Of the founding of the church in Smyrna we know nothing beyond the vague allusion of Acts xix: 10, but as we learn from the letter before us, it had an honorable history. The church has continued strong there ever since. There Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, suffered martyrdom about 155 A. D. In the middle ages Smyrna was the last city of Asia Minor to fall under the sway of the Turks.

1. Introduction. "These things says the first and the last, who was dead and lived." Here again we find the letter beginning with a description of Christ. Here was a city whose people prided themselves on its antiquity. They thought, no doubt, that its origins were lost in the distant past and to them probably its destruction seemed unthinkable. But this letter begins by holding up to the Christians in that city One who can claim greater antiquity and longer life. However old Smyrna was, it certainly was not the First and however long it lasts it certainly will not be the Last. This is what Christ claimed to be. The striking analogy to their city is further carried out in the following clause, "was dead and lived." Strabo tells us how, in the early years of the history of the city, Smyrna was destroyed by the Lydians and for four hundred years there was no "city" but merely a group of scattered villages. The city thus as a Greek city died, but continued to live on as a village state, then was refounded and once more became a Greek city. How suitable that the struggling Christians there should be reminded of the One who lived on in spite of death. In several striking ways the church in Smyrna contradicted outward appearances. It seemed poor, and no doubt was poor in all outward circumstances but because of its fidelity to Christ was really rich in the realities of life. It was suffering tribulation outwardly, but really was triumphant and earning the crown of life. Its enemies were mere pretenders, claiming to be the people of God but really the synagogue of Satan; it was real.

2. Knowledge. Christ assures them that their condition has not escaped Him.

A. He knows their tribulation. The Christians there had much suffering to bear although there is no indication that organized persecution had as yet broken out.

B. Their poverty was very noticeable in a great city where wealth abounded, especially as they were poor because of their fidelity to Christ and thus they were rich in another sense.

C. They had also to contend with some who pretended to be Jews but in the truest sense were really not so. We may get a slight hint as to the real character of these Jews from their conduct at the martyrdom of Polycarp. Although his trial and death took place on the Jewish Sabbath and in the Stadium many Jews assisted in his execution by carrying and arranging the wood for the fire by which he was burned, even surpassing the heathen in their zeal to be rid of him. Truly such were not true Jews but might fairly be described as blasphemers and of the synagogue of Satan.

3. Exhortation.

A. "Fear not . . . ten days." There are worse things coming than poverty. More "tribulation" is in store for them and some of them will be called upon to endure imprisonment as a test. This will be for a fairly short definite period, described as "ten days."

B. They are urged to be faithful unto death. As Smyrna had been characterized by unswerving faithfulness to Rome so should they be to Christ.

C. The general appeal found in all the other six letters is also here, "He who has an ear, etc."

4. The reward of fidelity is two fold.

A. The crown of life. This may refer to the hill with its splendid buildings on top, often spoken of as the "Crown" of the city, or it might refer to the wreath of flowers or laurel leaves given to the winner in the games which were frequently held there. Whichever the author has in mind it is eminently suitable.

B. But it is a better crown than buildings made by hands or leaves that will soon fade, it is a crown of *life,* which even the second death cannot destroy. The second death is again mentioned in xx: 6, 14 and xxi: 8 where it is described as a lake of fire and brimstone. The nature of the reward promised is

clear. The one who is unfalteringly faithful to Christ shall receive a reward from Christ far more excellent than anything earth can give.

5. This letter to the church in Smyrna presents a marked contrast to the letter to the church in Ephesus. The church in Ephesus is exhorted to return to a former and more acceptable frame of spirit while the one in Smyrna is urged to continue in its present state. Complaint is made against the church in Ephesus because it has left its first love, while no fault at all is found with the church in Smyrna. The church in Ephesus appeared to be alive and rich but really was dying and poor; the church in Smyrna was apparently dying and poor but really was living and rich. And lastly there is here the note of affection and entire approval while in the letter to the church at Ephesus there is a clear note of disapproval, and little or no indication of affection.

VII

The Letter to the Church in Pergamum, ii: 12-17.

Following the great road northward from Smyrna for some 55 miles the apocalyptic messenger would reach the third of the seven cities, Pergamos or Pergamum, situated on a large rocky hill, fitly located to dominate the whole valley and large plain of the river Caicus, and presenting the impression of permanence and authority.

For about four centuries preceding the time of this letter it had been the capital of a considerable territory, and when the seven letters were written this state of affairs still existed. In the latter half of the first Christian century it was the official Roman capital of the province though it was losing that honor as Ephesus was slowly coming to be recognized in popular opinion as the capital.

Religiously Pergamum was important. Four leading deities were worshipped, Zeus Soter, Athena Nikephoros, Dionysos Kathegemon, and Asklepios Soter; the two former were Hellenic and thus foreign, but they were glorified by the greatest efforts of Art in Pergamum; the two latter were Anatolian and so native to the soil of Asia. Zeus Soter (Jupiter Saviour) was king and father of the gods and men and supreme over all nature; he had a great altar on the slope of the hill. Athena Nikephoros (Minerva Bearer of Victory) had a magnificent temple almost crowning the acropolis. Dionysos Kathegemon (Dionysos the Leader) was the god of the royal family and the kings claimed to be his descendants and embodiments on earth. His worship was carried on in Imperial times by a religious society called Boukoloi (Ox-herds). The god was apparently of the animal type, probably a bull. The most important deity in Pergamum was however Asklepios Soter (Aesculapius Saviour). He was also of the animal type, being associated more particularly with the serpent. Asklepios was associated with the healing art, and a school of medicine was connected with his temple, attracting many sufferers from all quarters. The city was particularly devoted to the Imperial religion and the worship of the emperors and as early as B. C. 29 had a temple dedicated to Augustus, thus being the first of the Asian cities

to attain to the high honor of Temple Warden of which the city was very proud. The local priest of Jupiter proudly considered himself priest of the Divine Augustus as well.

Because of its situation and its religious and political position Pergamum stands out conspicuously as the city of authority, the royal city. In trade it was far inferior to Ephesus and Smyrna though surrounded by a rich valley. It did however become famous for a particular kind of leather adapted to purposes of writing called "parchment" to which it gave its name, (Pergamena).

The letter to the church in Pergamum is one of very great interest as none of the seven letters shows more careful adaptation to the circumstances of the city in which the church to which it is addressed is located.

1. Introduction, "These things . . . sword." Here we find Christ using the words of one who wears the badge of absolute authority when He addresses the church located in the seat of authority,—Pergamum. The sword (*ῥομφαίαν*) here mentioned is not the oriental scimitar or the ordinary cutting sword employed by many nations, especially the Greeks, but a two-edged, sharp-pointed weapon used by the Romans. The weapon, as also the name here given it, were originally of Thracian origin and therefore "barbarian" either from the point of view of Jew or Greek, to both of whom the Romans were a barbarian race. In Roman estimation the sword was the symbol of highest official authority possessed by the proconsul of the province, and included the power of life and death. As in the case of the other letters the description of Christ here is part of the complete description given in the first chapter. Thus the attention of the church in Pergamum is directed to One who holds authority far superior to that of any temporal power.

2. Recognition. "I know . . . dwells." As in the case of the other churches no merit or shortcoming escaped the eye of Christ.

A. Their dwelling place. This is described as the place of Satan's throne, and this was the chief element in determining their condition. By "Satan" must here be meant the official Imperial power that stood in opposition to the Church. Pergamum as the official capital of the province and by nature and history marked out as the royal city, was also the provincial seat

of the Imperial religion. This religion was most obnoxious to the Christians because it deified the emperors who were mere human beings and worshipped them as divine, though in some cases at least (e. g. Nero) they were notoriously wicked; also because the Imperial power was forcing them to adopt it.

B. Their fidelity was most commendable. They had stoutly refused to revile their Master by calling Caesar Lord and had remained true to Christ even though to do so meant a severe trial for them, Antipas, a faithful Christian had been put to death there. This is the first indication in the seven letters of a state persecution so severe that Christians were called upon to surrender either their lives or their devotion to Christ. Of Antipas we know no more than what is here told us. But we must not conclude either that he was the only martyr among the Pergamenian or Asian Christians; the woman drunk with the blood of the saints mentioned subsequently indicates otherwise; nor are we to assume that he really belonged to Pergamum, as prisoners from other parts of the province were frequently brought to the provincial capital for trial and execution.

3. Complaint. But the faithfulness of the church as a whole was marred. There were in it two parties, whose teachings were not according to the will of Christ. First. They had among them some who held the teaching of Balaam who is here described as having taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the Israelites so that they ate things offered to idols and were guilty of fornication. The earliest narrative of Balaam and Balak in Numbers xxii: 1—xxiv: 25 contains no indication that Balaam was guilty of this offence. But a later reference to Balaam in Numbers xxxi: 16 makes him responsible for the idolatry and fornication of the Israelites in the matter of Baal-peor recorded in Numbers xxv. It is clear that there were some in the Pergamenian church who supported these practices. Second. They had among them some who held the teaching of the Nicolaitanes which He hated (see ii: 6 and comment on it above).

4. Appeal.

A. They are called upon to repent.

B. If the church fails to repent Christ will fight against the Nicolaitanes (μετ' αὐτῶν) with the sword of His mouth. In this book Christ is sometimes pictured as a conqueror or warrior

(xix: 11ff). We may conclude that the church as a whole had tolerated the Nicolaitanes and that some of her people had listened to their teaching but that the church as a whole had not identified herself with them as it is clearly against *them* and not against the church that Christ threatens to fight.

C. Then there is the appeal contained in all the letters, "He who has an ear . . . churches."

5. Promise to the overcomer. "To him who overcomes . . . receives it."

A. The one who overcomes is promised the hidden manna. Probably the writer has in mind the manna given in the wilderness to the Israelites, a sample of which was preserved in a golden pot in the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies (Ex. xvi: 32, Heb. ix: 4), but the meaning is that in a spiritual, and so hidden, way Christ will provide the real nourishment for His followers. Indeed in the days of His flesh He declared that He was the bread of life, (John vi: 48). There was therefore no need of eating things offered to idols as Christ was prepared to give them something far better.

B. The overcomer was also promised a white stone inscribed with a mysterious name which only the recipient would understand. The exact significance of the white stone is uncertain. The word itself (ψῆφος) means a small stone or pebble, such as was often used for voting. Many suggestions have been offered of which a few are: The Jewish rabbis thought that precious stones fell with the manna; Zülig followed by Trench saw in it an allusion to the Urim (Ex. xxviii: 30) which was thought to have been a diamond engraved with the Tetragrammaton; others again see in it a reference to voting in the courts of justice, black pebbles being used to condemn and white to acquit the accused; the man on his acquittal was spoken of as νικήσας (i. e., having overcome) while the ψῆφος acquitting him was called νικητήριος (belonging to an overcomer); still others think there is a reference to the use of counters in reckoning (xiii: 18 ψηφιστάτω τὸν ἀριθμὸν let him count the number), or to the tickets which were sometimes distributed entitling those who held them to free entertainments, or to engraved stones used in magic or secret religious rites. None of these seems entirely satisfactory though perhaps the reference to magic or to the court of justice is on the whole the most satisfactory. The allusion in the expression "a new name" on the stone is equally

uncertain and difficult but it is altogether probable that it was suggested by magic rites and popular religious superstitions. Much emphasis was often laid on a name, which in popular belief was closely connected with the nature both of a person and of a god, guaranteeing, and even giving existence, reality, and life. Sometimes the true name of a god was kept secret lest strangers and enemies should gain influence over him. A new name indicated an entrance on a new life. The person who was admitted into the mysteries and received the new name not merely entered upon a new life whose abundance had been opened to him, but he learned the names of the god which would open the way for him and enable him to overcome hostile spirits. To know the name of a demon or god was thus to gain the secret of his influence and power. This reference to religious rites, (if such it were), was specially adapted to the church in Pergamum. In B. C. 27 the emperor had been given the new name or title of Augustus (Venerable) by the Roman Senate. This was an old sacred word used only by the priests and never before applied to any human being. But the emperor was beginning to be looked upon by the public generally as a god in human form. The Christians in Pergamum, "where the throne of Satan is," would recognize in this new name an indication that when they had triumphed their position would be like that of Augustus only higher, each having as his own secret inviolable possession the Name of God, which would set them over the world, triumphing over the Emperor and defeating him by the very tribulation, suffering, and death, which he inflicted upon them. Whatever may have been the particular reference in these words we may be sure that it was clear to the Christians in Pergamum. For us too the general sense at least is fairly clear. The white stone with the mysterious new name is the pledge and token of the Divine favor and intimate knowledge of Christ and God as only the one who receives it can adequately comprehend. We should note also that the word here used is not νεός, meaning, *new,* with respect to time or age, but καινός, meaning, *new,* in respect to quality, i. e., fresh and thus the suggestion is that of the eternal freshness of youth which the gospel inspires.

VIII

The Letter to the Church in Thyatira, ii: 18-29.

Thyatira was situated on slightly rising ground in the centre of a long depression connecting the Caicus and Hermus valleys. It was on an important road leading from Pergamum to Sardis and Laodicea some 40 miles from Pergamum. Although from early times there had been a settlement and heathen temple there, it was not until about 300 B. C. that it was founded as a Greek city. Its chief function was military though there was little to give it the appearance of an important stronghold. It lay in an open valley by gently sloping hills and had no proper acropolis. The general impression which it gives is one of weakness from a military point of view, and no one would think of it as fitted to be a capital city ruling an empire. But its situation made it important as a garrison. Situated on an important road leading to the political capital Pergamum, it was necessary that it should be made a strong military post. Every invader must capture it before he could proceed, but as soon as he had secured it he must refortify it for his own protection.

Commercially Thyatira was of small importance beside Smyrna or Ephesus. It had a considerable local trade however. The very conditions that made it feeble and therefore unfortunate in war, favored its prosperity in times of peace. In the long peace of the Roman Empire it steadily increased in size and wealth. While retaining the memory of its ancient days it ceased to be a military city. And this long period of peaceful progress was only well begun when the letter before us was penned. In the days of its prosperity it possessed more trade-guilds than any other Asian city, so far as known. On the inscriptions we find wool-workers, linen workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave-dealers, and bronze smiths, are all mentioned. These trade guilds probably formed the most outstanding feature in Thyatiran life when the letter before us was written. The woman of Thyatira who was so hospitable to Paul and his company (Acts xvi: 14, 15) may have been a member of one of these guilds who had gone to Philippi to push the sale of her goods. Religiously Thyatira was far inferior to Pergamum,

Smyrna, and Ephesus. It never attained to the honor of a temple-wardenship, but it had a deity of which it boasted. This god was called by the elaborate name of Helios Pythios Tyrimnaios Apollon ("Ηλιος Πύθιος Τυριμναῖος Ἀπόλλων). He was probably an ancient Lydian sun-god identified with the Greek Apollo. He was patron of the city, (and so named Προπάτωρ, i. e., Patron of the city and ancestor of its people), in front of which he had a temple or shrine, (and so called πρόπολις i. e., before the city). He seems to have been closely related to a warrior-god represented on coins and pictured as going forth on horseback with a battle-axe over his shoulder to conquer and destroy his enemies. The many names and titles present a strange mixture of Greek and barbarian religious sentiment, and in Thyatira he was doubtless the embodiment of the military spirit of the city. Games were held in honor of this deity. Under the Roman empire his worship was united with the cult of the emperors. The Greek goddess Artemis (or Diana) was also worshipped in Thyatira and her priestess was the wife of the priest of Apollo. Lastly, outside the city there was a shrine of the oriental sibyl Sambathe.

The scantiness of our knowledge of this city, especially as it was in the latter half of the first Christian century makes it difficult to understand this letter before us. Probably if our knowledge were sufficient we would find it one of the most instructive of the seven letters.

1. Introduction. "These things says the Son of God . . . brass."

A. Here for the first and only time in the Apocalypse Christ is referred to as the Son of God. But in several passages the same fact is indicated in other words, i: 6, ii: 27, iii: 5, 21, xiv: 1.

B. The penetrating power of His vision, His righteous indignation, and the keenness of His intellect are indicated in the eyes that appear as flames of fire.

C. The feet of shining brass taken with the other two phrases of this introduction suggest that He has an excellence far greater than that achieved by any skilled worker in Thyatira, and that He has strength and power to stamp out the enemies of the truth.

D. The majesty and exaltation of Christ described in these words is far greater than that indicated in the introduction to

any of the other letters.

E. In the case of the other letters the description of Christ in the introduction is strikingly in harmony with all we know of the cities in which these churches are located. But here He holds Himself up as the most exalted, though addressing a church belonging to a city that, so far as we know, was the most insignificant of the seven. If, however, our knowledge of the church and the city of Thyatira were greater we might find the description of Christ here also in harmony with them.

2. Recognition. "I know . . . first." Here we have a warm and hearty appreciation of the merits of the Thyatiran church. It was a church that possessed in a marked degree a number of important characteristics of a Christian congregation. The love and faith may have been shown toward God or toward each other, but more probably toward both in greater or less degree. The service is especially emphasized for we find their "works" twice mentioned in this short sentence, and their "service" as well, and also the expression, "and the last more than the first," which shows that they were increasing in this way, while in it all their patience is noted.

3. Complaint. "But I have . . . idols."

A. Who was this woman Jezebel? It is plain from the accurate knowledge of the condition of the seven churches that the author displays, and from the language of this letter that she was a real person or party in the church but whether her real name was Jezebel, or whether this name has been given her by the author because of her resemblance to the wicked wife of king Ahab (1 Kings xvi: 31, xviii: 13, xix: 2, etc.) we can only guess. The apocalyptic nature of the book would tend to indicate that this was not her real name. At any rate it is fairly clear that she is a member of the Christian body and not a heathen prophetess operating from without; it is not to any kind of heathen worship that she invites the Christians but to a loose form of Christian life, "To know the deep things of Satan" (vs. 24) appears to have been their motto. This appears to point to practices that were common in the early church but contrary to the teachings of Paul (1 Cor. viii: 1ff, x: 19ff), Peter (2 Pet. ii: 14ff), Jude, and the letters to the seven churches.

B. The nature of her teaching we must gather from what is here said as we have no further reference to the matter. The

very strong language used shows how obnoxious her doctrines and methods were to the author. She calls herself a prophetess. Notwithstanding the dictum of the apostle (1 Cor. xiv: 34 and 1 Tim. ii: 12) there were prophetesses in the early church (Acts xxi: 9), and several are mentioned in the Old Testament, (see Ex. xv: 20, Jud. iv: 4, 2 Kings xxii: 14, Isa. viii: 3 and cf. Luke ii: 36). The prophets were a recognized class in the Church in the time of the Apostles and we may be sure their influence was great. If "Jezebel" then could secure recognition as a prophet she had gained great advantage in publishing her doctrines. She is actually at work when the letter is written (διδάσκει, πλανᾶ), and with such success that real Christians are led by her to commit fornication and to eat things offered to idols. By the decision of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv: 28) these two things were absolutely forbidden and this appears to be in the author's mind in vs. 24 when he uses the words "I will cast upon you no other burden." In ii: 14, 15 we have the Nicolaitanes associated with Balaam and his heresy, but here there is no such association of Jezebel. Professor Ramsay (Letters p. 335ff) believes that she belonged to the Nicolaitanes and was the principal exponent of their teachings in the province (see note on ii: 6). When we reflect that the Nicolaitanes have been associated in vs. 14 and 15 with teachings that are closely akin to the results of Jezebel's work here mentioned and all are particularly obnoxious to Christ in all the three letters to which reference is made to them, it appears probable that all are of the same type and closely related.

C. Not only is Jezebel and her party included in the Thyatiran church but she is allowed by them (ἀφεῖς) to teach and seduce others in the church. This caused no diminution in the church's increasing volume of good works. The praise accorded them is for the whole church, including the Nicolaitanes, who indeed may have cherished "love and faith and service and patience," and at the same time continued active in the practical work of the congregation. There is no indication of any opposition to her in the congregation but rather of esteem and approval. But her influence was decidedly unhealthy, and any merits she may have had made her the more dangerous by increasing her influence. And further, we know that connected with her were some practises on which the early Christians found it difficult to decide their proper course. In the matter of

fornication there was a general sentiment against it and although some members of the Christian communities were guilty of the evil it was generally denounced; but it was always recognized as clearly inconsistent with Christian life, (1 Cor. v: 1, vi: 13, 18, 2 Cor. xii: 21, Eph. v: 3, 1 Thess. iv: 3, 2 Peter ii: 14ff, Jude 7). It was different however, in the case of the eating of meats offered to idols. The problem was before the Christians continually in all pagan communities and especially in the cities of Asia Minor, where trade and industry, society, and political life were saturated with the principles and practises of heathen religion. What attitude should Christians take to these practises? The fact that we have such frequent reference to the matter shows how persistent was the difficulty; (see Acts xv: 29, xxi: 25, 1 Cor. viii: 1ff, x: 19ff, 2 Pet. ii, Jude 7ff). The matter was one of practical every day living. In the matter of the eating of meats that had been offered in sacrifice to idols a practical principle for their daily guidance is laid down in (1 Cor. chaps. viii and x). So far as the meat itself was concerned they might partake of it; but in doing so they must on the one hand be careful to avoid injury to weaker brethren by their example, and on the other they must be unflinchingly faithful to Christ. They might ordinarily remain passive and unprotesting and need not be inquisitive or critical as they moved among their pagan associates, but they should be willing to deny themselves that which, while right and proper in itself and for them, would yet be injurious in its influence on a weaker brother, or an act of unfaithfulness to Christ. This principle, we may assume, came to be the one adopted by the Christians, not merely in the matter of eating meats offered to idols but in all their aspects of practical every day religious life so far as it had to do with pagan religions. But Jezebel, Nicolaitanes, and Balaam elements in the church argued for a more liberal and generous attitude. They would urge a fuller knowledge of "the deep things of Satan" (vs. 24). The issue thus came to be one of adapting Christianity to the circumstances of the time and really denying Christ, or holding fast to Christ and refusing compromise with practice that was essentially opposed to Christian principles. To the lasting credit of Paul, Peter, Jude, and the writer of the Apocalypse let it be said that they chose the former. Any other course would have meant the weakening and death of the

Church. Professor E. Schürer in 1892 published an article in which he argued that the Thyatiran Jezebel was the sibyl of the Sambathian shrine in the Chaldean quarter outside of Thyatira, and she was variously described as a Chaldean, Hebrew, Egyptian, Babylonian, or Persian soothsayer. Although this view has attractive features it must be discarded because it is impossible to believe that a church so highly praised for its love, faith, patience, service, and works could admit so completely a distinct and well known heathen sibyl. Some ancient manuscripts have the pronoun σοῦ (thy) after the word γυναῖκα. If this reading is adopted the meaning is "thy woman," and the close relationship between Jezebel and the church there is further indicated. We are told that Grotius accepted this reading and as he held that the angels of the churches were their bishops he concluded that Jezebel was the wife of the bishop of the church at Thyatira.

4. Judgment is pronounced on Jezebel and her party in vs. 21-23, "I gave her time . . . according to your works."

A. Opportunity to improve has been given to Jezebel and her company but there is no sign of improvement; in the expressive language of the original, she does not wish to repent, (οὐ θέλει μετανοῆσαι). The fact that she was given time to repent would indicate that the evil had existed for some time, not necessarily in Thyatira as prophets and teachers often moved from place to place.

B. The judgment will be like the sin. She will be cast into a bed and those with whom she has been guilty. Authorities are inclined to prefer βάλλω (present,—cast) to βαλῶ (future—will cast) regarding the event as imminent, but the future form μετανοήσουσιν (will repent) suggests that the future may be correct here. The bed (κλίνην) may be the banquet couch on which those partaking of the pagan feasts reclined, but it will be one of great misery for her and her guilty associates. There is however a chance of escape from this suffering even yet if "they repent of her works." The adulteries were certainly spiritual and may have been physical as well.

C. A second element in the judgment will be the death of her children, i. e., her spiritual followers who fail to repent.

D. The result of this severe treatment would be that Christ would be recognized in all the churches as One from whom no evil or good could be hid. The reins (kidneys or loins) signi-

fied the seat of inmost thoughts and purposes of the soul; hearts, the seat and centre of all physical and spiritual life, the soul or mind as the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, endeavors,—Thayer. Thus His searching and penetrating power is emphasized (cf. Jer xi: 20 and xvii: 10). Though Thyatira was small and remote the news would spread throughout the province to all the Christian communities.

E. While the judgment may be in a sense collective, each member of the church is to receive according to his works. The innocent will not be punished for the guilty or the guilty escape for the innocent, but each one according to his works, as the works are in this case an expression of the inner life.

5. A promise of splendid reward is given to those who do not yield to the allurements of "Jezebel." "But to the rest of you . . . I come."

A. Lest there should be any mistake or confusion in the matter great care is taken to indicate clearly those for whom it is meant. They are "the rest in Thyatira," which does not mean that they were necessarily in the minority. In ix: 20 *the rest* is two-thirds of the whole, and in xix: 21 *the rest* is all but two. They are "such as have not this teaching," i. e., of course, the teaching of "Jezebel" the false prophetess. Still again they are those who do not know the depths of Satan, as they say. "To know the depths," was a common phrase of the heretical sects of the second century and was used to signify the extent of the knowledge to which they believed they had attained. The phrase had come into use when the seven letters were written and was a common one with the prophetess and her followers.

B. No other burden was put upon them. This appears to carry us back to the Council of Jerusalem and its decision (Acts xv: 28, 29). Only the abstinence from fornication and things offered to idols, (and not abstinence from things strangled and from blood) is reimposed. But they must bear this minimum burden. This the followers of Jezebel would explain away or teach them to avoid. But as it must stand they condemned themselves.

C. They must, however, hold fast until He comes, what they already possess. That the expression, "what you have" refers, not to the burden but to the love, faith, patience, service, and

works of verse 19 (and especially the works), is plain from verse 26.

D. The first reward given to these who faithfully pursue the path of virtue to the end will be authority (ἐξουσία). Thyatira seemed to be the most poorly fitted of all the seven cities to rule over the nations. But to the church there is given the promise of universal power (cf. Ps. ii: 8f). He will rule over them as a shepherd does over his flock (ποιμανεῖ), his staff a rod of iron, his power sufficient to crush them to pieces like potters' vessels. Every one of them who, like Christ, was faithful unto the end, even though that end was death, received from Christ a victory and a share with Him in the subjugation of the world. Every seeming victory that the Imperial power achieved over the followers of Christ was but a step toward its own ultimate defeat and death.

E. The Christian who endures to the end will also receive the morning star from Christ. This probably was suggested by some circumstance in Thyatira well known to the members of the church, but what it was we cannot even guess now. However in xxii: 16 Jesus declares Himself to be "the bright, the morning star." We may understand that by this figure Christ would indicate that the victorious disciple will not merely receive power over the nations from Him, but will receive Himself without the terrible character of the previous verse, but with equal or even increased brilliance.

6. The letter closes with the same general appeal as is contained in the closing portions of the other six letters.

IX

The Letter to the Church in Sardis. iii: 1-6.

Sardis was situated at the juncture of the roads from Pergamum and Smyrna on a rocky cliff overlooking the Hermus valley. It was about 30 miles southeast of Thyatira, and had been the ancient capital of Lydia. It was looked upon by the ancient Greeks as a very important city, but its importance had greatly decreased when John penned the words of the letter before us.

The city was not easy to reach. On the east, north, and west the cliff was almost perpendicular and was regarded as inacessible. The only approach to it was from the south by a steep winding road that led across a narrow neck to the fortress some 1,500 feet above the level of the plain. It thus formed an ideal location for a stronghold in primitive times.

The history of Sardis goes back to the distant past reaching apparently to the beginning of the Lydian kingdom about 1200 B. C. From that time onward for many centuries it continued to be the capital. But as time went on the lofty promotory became too small for the capital and a new city was built around the base of the perpendicular cliff, the old one forming for it a splendid acropolis. Because of its strong military position the fate of Lydia was bound up with the fate of Sardis, the great, wealthy, and impregnable city which no one could capture.

Twice in its history, however, Sardis was captured, and both times by strategy. The first time was in the middle of the sixth century B. C. by the Persians. Crœsus the Lydian king, fabled for his great wealth, in preparing for his last war had taken, as he thought, all precautions to secure victory. According to the story Solon, the wise Greek law-giver, when on a visit to Sardis, had warned Crœsus to beware of self satisfaction and to call no man happy until he was dead and thus beyond the danger of defeat. The king desired to take the gods for his allies. He consulted the oracle at Delphi as in it alone he had confidence, for he had tried many others and found them wanting. With regard to the war with Cyrus the oracle informed him that if he

crossed the Halys he would destroy a powerful empire. He acted on the suggestion but was overwhelmingly defeated by Cyrus whose army pursued him to Sardis where the wealthy but defeated monarch took refuge, intending to raise a second army and destroy his Persian opponent. But before he could do this the victorious Persians had laid siege to his fortress. However he expected that they would soon be destroyed by his new army. Resting in that hope and confident that his stronghold could never be reached except by the one approach on the south which was well guarded, he retired to rest one evening as usual. But when he and his people awoke in the morning they found the Persians in possession of their city and fortress. The besiegers had discovered a crack or ledge on the steep rocky side of the fortress unnoticed by the defenders. Up that they climbed, and before their presence was known they had gained the prize, and Sardis was lost. The fate of Crœsus and his garrison long afterward served to warn the Greeks against overconfidence and careless security. The second occasion of the capture of Sardis was in 218 B. C. when Lagoras a native of Crete climbed the rocky face of the cliff and secured the coveted fortress for Antiochus. It was the story of Crœsus repeated. The garrison guarded the one known approach and left the rest of the circuit unprotected, in the belief that it could not be scaled.

In 334 B. C. the city surrendered willingly to Alexander the Great, who made it a self governing Greek city. But its fortunes varied as time passed. After the battle of Magnesia the Romans incorporated it in the realm of Pergamum. In A. D. 17 with eleven other cities it was destroyed by a great earthquake, but the emperor Tiberius remitted all its taxes for five years and in addition contributed ten million sesterces (about $2,000,000) to help rebuild it, so that it again became a great city.

The chief religious cult of Sardis was that of the goddess Cybele who was patron deity of the city and of whose temple two columns are still standing and visible. She was worshipped under the form of a strange and uncouth idol. The Sardian goddess was looked upon as the mother of her people. She dwelt in nature, particularly in Mt. Tmolus, and by the sacred lake of Koloe some miles north of the city across the Hermus river beside which was the necropolis of Sardis, where, in the

early days, its chiefs and rulers were laid to return to their divine mother. The favorite animal and the symbol of the goddess was the lion. She was everywhere thought to have healing power and even the ability to restore life to the dead. This power seems to have been associated with certain hot springs famous for their curative properties and situated close to the city. Dionysius, Aphrodite, Athena, the Lydian Apollo, and the local deities of Tmolus and Hermus, were also honored at Sardis. As elsewhere in Asia the local worship became fused with the Imperial religion.

But when the Apocalypse was written Sardis had passed the zenith of its excellence and had become a city of the past, though its people continued to remember and cherish the ancient glory of their city. The greatness which it possessed was due to its military importance, and under the peaceful reign of Rome that could not continue. Thus it was steadily and continuously decaying. Only in the long period of the Turkish wars in the middle ages did it again become important. It has now almost entirely disappeared.

In none of the seven letters do we discern a closer or more frequent reference to the history, character, and circumstances of its city than in that of Sardis. This will appear as we consider the letter in detail.

Then we notice the great similarity between this letter and the one to the Ephesian church. The introductions are similar, both churches were retrograding but the Sardian church had advanced much further in this way than that at Ephesus; both had begun enthusiastically and commendably but had cooled down. The language in which both are reminded of their shortcoming is similar, as is that in which they are warned of the result of their failure.

1. Introduction. "These things says . . . stars."

A. The seven spirits of God. In ch. v: 6 the seven eyes of the Lamb are declared to be "the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth," and in iv: 5 they are "lamps of fire" burning before the throne of God. In i: 4 they are not defined. Probably therefore we should understand the expression to imply that not only is Christ in the midst of the churches holding them in His hand (i: 16, 20) but also in their midst scrutinizing their inmost being and taking note of their merits and defects. In the light of such an inquiry the church in Sardis

falls very far short.

B. The seven stars (cf. i: 16, 20, ii: 1 and notes).

2. Complaint. "I know . . . dead." Here the tone and language become severe. The church, like the city in which it was situated, was really dead while seeming and claiming to be alive. The characteristic of the church in Smyrna was life in apparent death; but of Sardis it is just the opposite,—death in apparent life.

3. The exhortation is urgent and suited to the character of the church to which it is addressed, "Be watchful . . . repent."

A. This exhortation begins with an appeal for watchfulness. Doubtless the author has in mind the two occasions when Sardis was captured because of its failure to exercise sufficient vigilance; so the church there must bestir itself. Amid the general death Christ saw signs of life.

B. Like the city again the church was dying and it must hasten to strengthen its position by establishing any graces of faith, love, patience that were left, and by vigorous activity in the service of Christ.

C. The character of their works is indicated. Their works were incomplete in the sight of God. This indicates an indifferent and slothful spiritual condition on the part of the church. Their works were few and of poor quality, lacking the spirit of life that made them acceptable to God.

D. The thoughts of the church are turned to the earlier days in order to stimulate her to recovery. She had heard the gospel and received it but had not kept it. She must turn from her present condition of indifference and neglect to a condition of watchful care over the faith committed to her.

4. Warning. "If therefore . . . come upon you." Could any words be more suited to the circumstances of the church in Sardis than these words which would call to mind the lack of watchful care resulting in the capture of the city twice in the past when the soldiers of Cyrus and Antiochus came upon the city "as a thief?" No city so carelessly guarded could hope to escape, nor could a church so indifferent prevail.

5. Recognition. "But you . . . worthy."

A. Although the church as a whole was past hope there were a few in it who had remained faithful to Christ. These had kept themselves unspotted from the prevailing wickedness about

them. The expression "did not defile their garments," may doubtless be taken as indicating the source of the trouble with the church in Sardis. It had suffered from too close contact with heathen impurities and had insufficiently cared for its relation to Christ.

B. These faithful ones would continue in their purity and in their fellowship with Christ and indeed that purity and fellowship would be increased. Whatever the color of their garments may have been, they will be clothed in white, the symbol of spotless purity. For their care in avoiding the evils surrounding them they will be rewarded with perfect purity. And to that purity will be added the closest fellowship with Christ. They shall walk with Him. By this it is evidently meant that their relationship to Him will be very close and personal. It is impossible to miss, too, the note of personal affection to them expressed in these words.

C. The reason for this is given very briefly, "They are worthy," and these words are so plain that there is no possibility of mistaking their meaning.

6. Promise. "He who thus overcomes . . . angels."

A. The overcomer is promised an attire of white, repeating and applying to every member of the church in Sardis who would comply with the condition the promise of vs. 4, though it is not said that he will walk with Christ. The white garments doubtless were intended to typify purity received through the cleansing power of Christ (cf. vii: 13).

B. "And I will not . . . life." In all Greek and Roman cities a record of the citizens was kept according to their class or tribe. In this record the names of new citizens were entered and from it the names of those degraded were removed. The record was one of living citizens. So Christ had His record of His people. Those who overcome He enrolls as citizens of His kingdom. This again is another way of expressing Christ's recognition of His people who by His grace have overcome.

C. Those who overcome Christ will recognize as His own before God.

7. The letter closes with the same general appeal as that which concludes the other six.

X

The Letter to the Church in Philadelphia. iii: 7-13.

Following the great road southeasterly from Sardis for some 30 miles the ancient messenger would reach Philadelphia, a small city founded about the middle of the second century B. C. and given its name in honor of Attalus II who was described by this term because of his loyalty to his brother. While the military interest was never wholly absent in important eastern cities in New Testament times, it would appear that it was of secondary importance in the case of Philadelphia, which was founded chiefly to be a centre of Graeco-Asiatic civilization, and thus to spread civilization in the territories east of and beyond it. Thus from the beginning it is stamped as a missionary city, and so successful was it that before A. D. 19 Greek had become the sole language of Lydia.

Philadelphia became famous chiefly because of the great earthquake of A. D. 17 which destroyed, or greatly injured, twelve cities of the Province, and like Sardis it received from Tiberius the emperor generous help to rebuild. We learn from Strabo (who wrote in A. D. 20) that earthquake shocks were then frequent and that the people were so much afraid of them that many resided outside the city in booths and huts, while those who remained took special precautions to support their houses. The city is situated at the edge of a great plateau where volcanic eruptions and earthquakes were common in ancient times, and the black lava streams and heaps of cinders are yet visible. In appreciation of the emperor's generosity Philadelphia joined with the other stricken cities and built a monument in his honor at Rome, also it took the new name of Neokaisareia in his honor but the new name seems to have fallen out of use later and the old one appears to have been restored to popular favor. Again in the reign of Vespasian A. D. 70-79, it took the new name of Flavia.

The chief deity of Philadelphia was Dionysos Kathegemon whose worship, as in Pergamum became merged in the Imperial cult.

We may then sum up the distinctive features of Philadelphia as four:—first, it was a missionary city; second, its people lived

continually in fear of a disaster; third, many of its people went outside the city to live; fourth, it took a new name on two occasions.

The letter to the church in Philadelphia is to be classed with the one to the church in Smyrna as against either the Head of the church makes no complaint at all. But it differs from the other six letters in the warmth of affection expressed to the church as a whole. To none of the other churches does He say, "I loved you."

The letters to the Smyrnaean and Philadelphian churches form a class by themselves because in them there is no complaint against these churches. Other analogies are:—The praise to both is far more hearty than that to any of the others; both had serious difficulties to meet, the church at Smyrna poverty, the one at Philadelphia, weakness; both had to contend with difficulties caused by the Jews; both may expect suffering and trial, but both it is hoped, will bear it; in the case of these only is a crown part of the reward; and in these only are difficulties created by the Jews mentioned, although there must have been Jews in all the seven cities, and in many, and perhaps all places where there were Christians they must have been a source of trouble to their Christian neighbors. We may also note that these two cities have been the strength and glory of the country since it fell under Mohammedan rule, and they are the two places which resisted Turkish capture the longest, and where even in slavery the Christians preserved cohesion among themselves and real influence among their Turkish conquerors (Ramsay, Letters 402f).

1. Introduction. "These things says . . . opens." This address differs from those to the other churches in that not one of the points in the description of Christ is found in the complete description of Him in i: 13-18. Still the description is remarkably suited to the character of the church there.

A. Christ is referred to as "The Holy" (ὁ ἅγιος) and above all others the letter indicates that Philadelphia was the holy city which He loved. To the holy city He is the One of absolute holiness and truth.

B. Christ is also referred to as "The True" (ὁ ἀληθινός) cf. iii: 14 and xix: 11. This designation of Him is also particularly appropriate in addressing a church that has kept His word and

has not denied His name while its enemies are those who falsely claim to be Jews.

C. Christ is represented further as having the key of David, and as possessing supreme power to open and shut (cf. Isa. xxii: 22). This again is particularly suitable in the case of a city that is active as a missionary centre and a church that was of the same character.

2. Recognition. "I know your works . . . my name." Here the works are such as meet with unqualified approval. Not much is said of the detailed character of the works but we may assume from the tone of the letter that there was much love, faith, patience, and service, especially as there is before this church the privilege of a great opportunity, and as He represents Himself to be Holy and True.

There is considerable doubt as to the exact relationship of the clauses of this verse and different interpretations are possible. First. To treat the expression, "Behold . . . shut" (*ἰδοὺ . . . αὐτήν*) as a parenthesis and connect the conjunction (*ὅτι*, that, because) of the following clause with the opening words of the verse *οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα.* (I know your works). On this view the meaning is that He knows their works, that they have little strength but have kept His word and not denied His name in spite of their weakness. The parenthesis would be separated by dashes as in the text of Westcott and Hort (*Οἶδα σου τὰ ἔργα,—ἰδοὺ . . . . . αὐτήν,—ὅτι. . . . . .*) Thus the character of their works is clearly indicated with a suggestion of the reason of the open door that He has given them. This is the view taken in the Revised Version and by Dr. H. B. Swete. Second. We might understand the clause *ἰδοὺ . . . αὐτήν* as not being parenthetical and the *ὅτι . . . μου* as connected with it explaining why He has set before them the open door. Then we should have a semicolon or period after *ἔργα* and a semicolon (or preferably a comma) after *αὐτήν*, and the meaning is that because of their fidelity to Him in their weakness they are given a great work to do. Thus the reason of the open door is clearly indicated with a suggestion as to the character of the works. This view is followed by the Authorized Version and Professors Scott and Ramsay.

A. He had set before them an open door that none could shut. The figure of the open door is common in the New

Testament; Acts xiv: 27, 1 Cor. xvi: 9, 2 Cor. ii: 12, Col. iv: 3, are examples indicating the significance attached to the phrase in the Apostolic Church. There can be little doubt that it bears the same meaning here, and that meaning is an opportunity for successful missionary activity, and not an entrance into eternal life or into God's kingdom on earth. There was a large territory north and east from Philadelphia waiting for and needing the gospel, and the church there was the one to have the honor of doing the work.

B. The city lay at the upper end of a broad depression extending from the coast, and at the edge of the great plateau of Phrygia. One of the two chief arteries of travel and commerce passed through it from Smyrna eastward to the vast country beyond, and a great route for trade and travel meant also an opportunity for missionary effort. Thus Philadelphia was at the portal of the vast territory of the Phrygian plateau. The language is strong, and to no other of the seven churches is anything like it said. The opportunity was a gift from Christ and none would be able to take it from them. They had been using the little strength they had keeping His word and not denying His name, and "to him that hath shall be given." And while we are not told that the church used the opportunity thus given it, we may infer that to have been the case. We may note also that here alone in the seven letters is there a reference to what seems to be the reason why these particular seven cities were marked out to be "the Seven Churches of Asia." While all the churches in Asia, had their doors of opportunity, and all the seven to whom the Apocalypse is addressed had their subsidiary districts, the Philadelphian church was marked out as the most conspicuous in this particular feature.

C. The strength of the church was small, which doubtless means either that it was composed of but a few people, or that it had little influence, or perhaps both. But in spite of this handicap it had faithfully kept His word and had not denied His name. The city itself was weak, especially after the great earthquake of A. D. 17, and because of the frequent recurrence of the shocks afterward it only slowly regained its strength, most people being afraid to live in it, while those who did dwell there had to devise special measures to support their dwellings and buildings. The particular nature of the circum-

stances through which its fidelity had been conspicuous we are not told; but they may have been connected with the opposition of the Jews as mentioned in the following verse.

3. Encouragement. Here we have two great promises, the first related to present trials, the second to a time of coming hardship. There is also a third, a general one, like those of the other letters, "to him who overcomes, etc." In the first two of these especially, we see the very warm attitude of Christ toward the Philadelphian church.

A. "Behold I give . . . loved you." The Jews were an important class in the Asian cities and evidently were a source of considerable trouble to the Christians as we learn from various parts of the New Testament. There as in Smyrna (ii: 9) they are Jews in name but far from being so in the strictest sense. In all probability their chief characteristic there as elsewhere in those days was their intense national spirit supported by their religious ideas. They believed themselves to be the chosen of God whom He would exalt to be the rulers of the world at the coming of Messiah. They thus despised those of their number who became Christians, esteeming them as traitors to their race and enemies to God, being without the true spirit of love to God and to their fellow men (Lev. xix: 18, Deut. vi: 5). But there was to be a change. Christ would force these same Jews to recognize His love for the Philadelphian church, and to bow in reverence before it, thus recognizing that not themselves but the church, is the true Israel of God.

B. "Because you kept . . . world." They have been faithful to Christ and Christ would not forsake them when they needed Him most. A season of trial was near at hand but its character is not definitely disclosed. To the Christians of that day it would mean the troublous times that were thought immediately to precede the return of Christ which was believed to be near at hand; these troublous times they would identify with the Imperial persecution then begun. The words would recall to their hearers and readers the great earthquake, which was still fresh in the minds of the people, and be an assurance to the little Philadelphian church of safety in any trial that should come. The trial would fall upon the whole inhabited world and would "try" or sift the people, separating as it were, the wheat from the chaff.

4. Exhortation. "I . . . crown."

A. The time of Christ's return was not far distant.

B. The promises were conditional. If they were to receive the homage of the Jews, and safe keeping in the hour of trial, they must persevere in their fidelity to Christ. If they failed in this way some other might capture the prize that was theirs.

5. A great promise is given. "He who overcomes . . . name."

A. The overcomer would be made a pillar in the temple of God, and he should go no more out. A pillar in a building serves to strengthen and support the building which rests upon it, while it is fixed firmly by the building. The victorious Christian in Philadelphia would be upholding the honor of Christ there and at the same time would be fixed himself so that he would be shaken in no disaster, nor would be ever "go out" from goodness as the residents of his city went out to live after the great earthquake.

B. The conqueror is to receive a new name, indeed three new names, though Prof. Ramsay believes it to be one name with a three-fold significance (Letters p. 412) Christ will write upon him. First. The new name of my God (cf. 2 Cor. iii: 3). This can only mean that their lives and characters will be radiant with the Divine grace given through Christ, as they honor and serve Him. Second. The name of the city of God, New Jerusalem which descends out of heaven from God, (cf. Gal. iv: 26 and Heb. xii: 22); to bear the name of the city of God is to be included in the number of her citizens. New (καινή) refers to quality not time or age, and its heavenly quality is indicated by its coming down out of heaven from God. This is explained more fully in (xxi: 2-27). Third. The new name of Christ is also to be given him. By this we are probably to understand a symbol of the fuller glories of His person and character. The new name of Christ is probably one of the designations of Him found in the book and one that had not been particularly applied to Him before. Of these there are several, Lion of the tribe of Judah (v: 5), Root of David (v: 5 and xxii: 16), a mysterious name (xix: 12), Word of God (xix: 13), King of kings and Lord of lords (xvii: 14 and xix: 16), Offspring of David (xxii: 16), Bright and Morning Star (xxii: 16). Some of these might be described as characterizations rather than names. But the names in v: 5 and

xix: 13, 16 appear to be names of Christ and the last two are distinctly called names. These are applied to Him as a conqueror and seem to be particularly suited to this passage, especially the latter. We are to understand that the overcomer by receiving the new name of Christ is characterized as a king and a victor with Him.

C. With Prof. Ramsay, (Letters p. 409ff) we may note that the gift of the new names is another fine adaptation of the message to the history of the city where the church addressed was located. Philadelphia only of the seven cities abandoned its old name and took a new name derived from the Imperial religion, calling itself Neokaisareia in honor of the emperor and building a temple for his worship as a mark of appreciation of his generosity to them after the earthquake, and adding to the temple a priest and a ritual. Such a name was considered as very honorable, was taken only with the approval of the Roman Senate, and was thought to bind the city closely to the Imperial service. Thus Philadelphia took the name of the Imperial god and designated itself as his city. If the new name Neokaisareia, referred to Germanicus the emperor's son the parallel would be all the more complete. On a second occasion too, as we learned above, the city adopted a new name. But not for long did it retain either of these, but reverted to its old name some time before the Apocalypse was written; and as there is no mention of the worship of this temple after A. D. 50, and as the city later returned to its old name, perhaps we may assume that the temple had fallen into disuse. This would give John a fine opportunity to point out the superior gift of Christ who will do far more for them than the emperor's bounty ever could for the pagan city.

6. The letter concludes with the same appeal as the other six.

It is interesting to note that in the times when we can catch a glimpse of Philadelphia it is living amid dangers. In ancient times there were earthquakes, in more recent times there were Turkish attacks. But above all others of the seven cities it has been kept from the hour of trial, standing like a pillar, faithful to the Name and patient to the last.

XI

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea. iii: 14-22.

Laodicea the last of the seven cities, occupied an important position in the valley of the Lycus river almost due east of Ephesus. It was distant some 40 miles from Philadelphia and located at the confluence of two great roads, one coming southeast to it from Sardis and Philadelphia while the other connected it with Ephesus. The united road extended far to the eastward, connecting it with the vast interior of the peninsula. It was thus the gateway to the interior. The city was founded by Antiochus II about the middle of the third century B. C. and named after his wife. Its mission was to be a centre for the spread of Greek civilization and language in barbarian Phrygia but in this it failed so completely that Phrygia was the least Hellenized part of the province though the reason of its failure, when Philadelphia its neighbor succeeded in the same work, we do not know. Of course every outpost of civilization in those days was more or less military in its nature and Laodicea was no exception. It was a strong fortress but it had one serious weakness. So far as we can now judge it was entirely dependent for its water supply on an aqueduct supplied from springs some six miles to the south. This an enemy on the outside could easily cut off and render the city entirely helpless.

Laodicea was of considerable commercial importance. It was only a small city before the Roman time but when the Romans kept peace in the country it grew rapidly. It was a centre of trade and banking so that in 51 B. C. Cicero, the Latin author, brought orders to be cashed there. It became quite famous as a manufacturing centre where garments of various sorts were made and was especially noted for a black glossy wool produced in the valley. So prosperous was the city that when it was smitten by a great earthquake in A. D. 60-1 it rose from its ruins without the assistance of an Imperial subsidy.

The chief god of the valley was Men Karou (Carian Men) whose temple was situated about 13 miles west of Laodicea. This temple was a centre of society, administration, intercourse, and trade, (as well as of religion), for the district. A market

was held under its protection where the people met to trade with strangers from a distance. In connection with the temple there was a famous school of medicine, though the school seems to have been located in the city and not at the temple. This school had flourished for 150 or 200 years when the Apocalypse was written. An ointment for strengthening the ears was made at Laodicea and a powder or tabloid spoken of as Phrygian and used for the eyes was probably produced there originally. As Greek civilization and speech became common the people still worshipped Men but they identified him with the Greek god Zeus (Jupiter) who was commonly worshipped in that part of the province. Laodicea was an important centre in the Imperial religion and was honored with a temple wardenship toward the close of the second century A. D.

Jews seem to have been quite numerous in Laodicea. In 62 B. C. the Roman governor Flaccus refused to allow them to send their usual contribution to Jerusalem on the ground that the loss of the coin might be dangerous. The amount was twenty pounds weight of gold at Laodicea and a hundred pounds at Apameia in Phrygia. As the annual tax was two drachmae this would probably imply a population of some 7,500 adult Jewish freemen in Laodicea and vicinity, (to which we must add women and children), and five times as many at Apameia. But the population in Laodicea and the Lycus valley generally was of a mixed character.

Of the beginnings of the Christian Church in Laodicea we have some hints in the New Testament. When Paul addressed his letter to the church at Colosse he had not visited the district, although there was a body of Christians there and at Laodicea which was not far distant (Col. ii: 1). Of it he had some detailed knowledge (id. iv: 15) and sent it a letter (id. iv: 16). It may have been founded by Epaphras (Col. i: 7 and iv: 12ff) and it appears to have continued almost to modern times as it had a bishop in 1450 A. D. Sagaris its bishop died a martyr in A. D. 166 and various other of its bishops and presbyters are mentioned by early writers. It was the leading bishopric of Phrygia throughout the Christian period. Laodicea as a city was devoid of distinctive features and in this lies its peculiar character. Easily able to adapt itself to the needs and wishes of others it became pliable and accommodating, full of the spirit of compromise.

1. Introduction. "These things says . . . God." These words stand in sharp contrast to the character of the church to which they are addressed. The description of Christ here, like that in the Philadelphian letter, is outside the general description of Him in chapter i: 13-20. It is one, however, that remarkably suits the church at Laodicea, though the very opposite of the character of that church which was vacillating and unreliable.

A. He is the Amen. This word, originally derived from the Hebrew contains the idea of firmness, truth, reliability, steadfastness. There may be a reference to Isa. lxv: 16 where the word is used of God ("God of truth") or the frequent use of the word by Christ may be in the writer's mind.

B. He is the faithful and true witness (compare i: 5, iii: 7). He never fell short of perfect faithfulness and absolute truth no matter what the cost to Him.

C. He is the beginning of the creation of God (ἡ ἀρχὴ της κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ). We cannot translate "the first of the creation of God," as the whole tone of the Apocalypse represents Him as Divine and is such as to forbid our considering Him a created being, even though He were looked upon as the first or supreme member of the whole number of created objects. Dr. Swete (Apocalypse p. 59) understands the words to refer to Him as the origin of the creation, the uncreated principle from which it took its rise (cf. John i: 1, 3, 14). The word ἀρχὴ (beginning) will readily bear this sense. This is doubtless the best way to take it at least until further light is thrown on its meaning, especially as it is in accord with a description of Him with which the church there was in all likelihood familiar (Col. i: 15, 18 and iv: 15).

2. Recognition. "I know your works . . . mouth."

A. The condition. But as in the case of Sardis there is nothing commendable to note. The Laodicean church seems to be free from the evils that afflicted the churches in Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, and Sardis, but on the other hand it has none of their merits. It is lacking entirely in spiritual fervour, and so is not "hot." It is also lacking in that complete indifference which would characterize it as "cold."

B. The result. Tepid water is nauseating to the taste and is expelled from the mouth, and such is lukewarmness to Christ. There may be a reference to some hot springs located at Hiera-

polis six miles north of Laodicea, whose waters become lukewarm as they traverse the plateau and in this state fall over the cliff directly opposite Laodicea. This cliff is visible for a great distance because of the white incrustations of lime that have gathered on it.

3. Counsel. "Because you say . . . see."

A. The church in Laodicea was located in a wealthy city and thought it had need of nothing. Not only was it lukewarm but it was contented to continue so, and was evidently greatly pleased and thoroughly satisfied with its condition, even boasting of it.

B. In its abundant external wealth it failed to recognize its own spiritual poverty. Wealth in this world's goods is not wealth in God's sight (Luke xii: 21). The Laodicean church had the former but not the latter. Because ignorant and self-satisfied it was really the wretched one and miserable in spite of its boasted abundance and freedom from need. It was really poor because without that which made it rich toward God, blind because unable to discern its true condition, and naked because so completely without the clothing of Christ's righteousness.

C. They are counselled by Christ Himself and the counsel is remarkably wise and helpful though direct and clear. That counsel is cast in language that fits in well with their circumstances. They are not forbidden to continue in their mercantile pursuits but they must devote attention to Christ, receiving from Him the real gold that was imperishable in contrast to that which was current among the Laodiceans for this was the true riches, white garments that they might be clothed in contrast to the garments of black glossy wool so common there and so highly prized, and true medicine for the eyes in contrast to the tabloids (or powder) furnished by their own school of medicine. The meaning of all this is clear. They must give their minds and hearts to the things of Christ. The gold is doubtless faith, expressing itself in good works (Luke xii: 21, Jas. ii: 5, 1 Pet. i, 1 Tim. vi: 18). This is described as "refined from the fire" because of the severe trials attending the process (1 Pet. i: 7). The white raiment is no doubt a life in Christ unspotted from the world (Gal. iii: 27, Jas. i: 27) which alone will be sufficient in the fierce light of the Divine Presence (2 Cor. v: 10). The eye-salve is the Holy Spirit which brings spiritual illumination (John xvi: 8ff). To

buy these from Christ is to receive them from Him giving up for that purpose all the selfish ease and worldly things that may prevent their reception.

4. Exhortation. "I rebuke and chasten . . . repent." The section from this point onward to the close of the chapter Professor Ramsay considers an epilogue to the whole seven letters and not a part of the letter to the church in Laodicea. The reasons for this, however, do not appear to be sufficient, and it seems better to consider it as a part of the letter.

A. In spite of the declared intention of Christ to spew them out of his mouth these severe words are yet spoken in love and His rebuke and chastisement must be considered as evidence of His love, (cf. John xv: 2, Heb. xii: 6); *rebuke* (ἐλέγχω) refers more particularly to oral correction while chasten (παιδεύω) refers to more severe discipline such as a parent would give his child. We hear nothing of this church having borne any trials and its shortcomings may have been due to the lack of such. But severe discipline of this sort came later when, as Eusebius tells us (H. E. iv: 26, v: 24), Sagaris its bishop died in martyrdom.

B. Their defect was in enthusiasm; therefore they are urged to exhibit a whole-hearted devotion to the Master. They should also repent and become fervent in spirit.

5. Promise. "Behold I stand . . . his throne."

A. Here the speaker ceases to address the church as a whole but turns to its members individually. He comes to each one of them as a friend, and standing at the door knocks for admission. If He is admitted the tenderest and most intimate fellowship is the result. The corporate life of the church has ceased to be a means of true fellowship with Christ but Christ still offers His fellowship to the individual. "Thus the most gracious invitation and also the most glorious promise are addressed to those Christians for whom the conditions of spiritual life are most difficult."

B. The promise. To the person who hears and responds to His words He offers a share in His own exaltation, and points to his own example as further encouragement. The writer of the book has attained to that blessedness in some degree according to his words in ch. i: 6. So far as we are able to see, the promise here has no connection with the circumstances of the church, though if we knew more of the historical situation we

might discern a real connection as in the case of the promises in the other letters.

6. The letter like the others closes with a general appeal for attention, "He who has an ear let him hear, etc."

7. This church is the only one which is absolutely and wholly condemned. There is not even a faithful remnant as in Sardis. Although counsel and promise are given there is no hope that they will avail for the church as a whole though they may in the case of a few of the individuals that compose the church.

Before passing from the seven letters it remains only to note that two are condemned—Sardis and Laodicea. Sardis has a remnant still faithful but even that is lacking in Laodicea, and at the present day these two are entirely deserted and uninhabited. Two churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia, are praised in an unreserved and affectionate way, and these two cities had the glory and honor of being the last to yield in the long wars that led up to the Turkish conquest. To the remaining three mingled praise and blame is given though on the whole the praise exceeds the blame. Of these Pergamum and Thyatira persist to this day as towns of some importance while Ephesus alone, that should be moved out of its place if it did not repent, is only an insignificant village moved some little distance from the site of the ancient and important city.

XII

The Throne in Heaven. iv: 1-11.

We now come to the second of the two great visions that chiefly make up the Apocalypse of John, this one extending from the beginning of ch. iv to ch. xxii: 5. In this section of the book we find its main purpose although something of that purpose may be discerned in the previous chapters. But in this vision the seer draws the veil and gives his readers a glimpse of the real nature of the forces which are at work in the world about them. And first there comes the vision of the throne in heaven given in this chapter.

1. Introduction. "After these things . . . in the spirit."

A. "After these things," is a phrase that connects what follows with what has preceded but indicates a change of some importance. It occurs again in ch. vii: 1, 9, xv: 5 and xviii: 1.

B. "A door opened in the heaven." Similar expressions are found both in the Old and New Testaments (cf. Ezek. i: 1, Mark i: 10, John i: 51) and in apocalyptic literature (Enoch xiv: 13). Here it is a door of revelation and not a door of opportunity as in iii: 8 or the door of the heart as in iii: 20.

C. He hears a voice which summons him to the angel speaker (cf. xix: 10, xxii: 8), and promises to reveal the future to him. In these words "what must come to pass hereafter," we have the great purpose of this vision indicated. That purpose is to explain the future, and to this all else is subsidiary.

D. Just as the words are spoken he enters that state of spiritual exaltation which he had experienced in the case of the first vision (i: 10) but apparently much more intense. Then it enabled him to see and hear, but now in addition to these powers it summons him to the side of the angel.

2. The throne and its Occupant. "And behold . . . appearance."

A. The first object that he sees is an extraordinary Person sitting on a throne (*θρόνος*, seat). The rendering "a throne was set" of the Authorized Version, while literally and grammatically correct is scarcely permissible here; the verb *ἔκειτο* (was placed) is generally used intransitively, and simply means,

"was standing," or merely, "was" (cf. John xix: 29), while the following clause indicates that the throne was occupied when John saw it, and consequently the act of placing it had previously been completed. In the Old Testament the throne of God is often spoken of as in heaven (e. g. Ps. xi: 4). While the identity of the occupant of the throne may be guessed, it is not until vs. 8 that it is clearly indicated.

B. The description of the Occupant of the throne is very simple. It is said merely that He appeared like a jasper and sardine stone and round about the throne was a rainbow like an emerald. It is difficult to decide exactly what precious stones as we know them, are meant here. But it is clear that the throne was surrounded by a bright halo and an arch or circle of different hue, both of which were splendid in appearance. John may have in mind Ezek. i: 28. Attempts have been made to interpret the significance of these. Beyond the impression of holiness and majesty all such attempts are speculative and unreliable.

3. The elders. "And round the throne . . . on their heads." Around the haloed figure are twenty-four elders occupying each a throne (or seat, *θρόνος*). All are clad in white garments and wear golden crowns. What these signify is not plain and there has been great variety in the suggestion offered. They appear to form a heavenly senate or presbytery. That they form a symbol both in their character and number is clear, but of what is uncertain. Some see in them a reference to the elders of Israel (Ex. iii: 16, xix: 7, xxiv: 1, Num. xi: 16ff, etc.), the twelve tribes, (24 = 2x12) the twelve patriarchs (sons of Jacob, Gen. xlix), or the twenty-four priestly courses (1 Chron. xxiv: 1-19). The only function in which they engage is worship (iv: 10, v: 8). Probably the best explanation is that they represent the twelve tribes of Israel completed in the twelve apostles and thus the whole Israel of God, the double representation signifying the Jewish and Gentile elements then present in the Church. To the Jewish reader or hearer the suggestion would be the tribes, patriarchs, or the priestly courses; to the Gentile, the twelve apostles of Christ (cf. xxi: 14). Thus the 24 elders may be understood as representing the Church in its totality, but idealized, and therefore robed in white, crowned, and enthroned in the presence of God.

4. Other features of the throne. "And out of the throne . . . crystal." As again the seer turns to the throne he observes other features of it.

A. From the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders (cf. viii: 5, xi: 19, xvi: 18). As the law was given to Moses at Sinai there was a terrible storm (Ex. xix: 16) and the thunder storm in Hebrew poetry is frequently used as a concomitant of divine power and glory, (Ps. xviii: 6ff, xxix: 1ff, 1 Sam. ii: 10, Job xxxvii: 4ff). There seems to be no special significance attached to these demonstrations other than as expressions of Divine majesty. Possibly a great storm was raging on Patmos when these visions came to John.

B. There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne. These are not the lamps (λυχνίαι) of i: 12 but torches (λαμπάδες) burning steadily before the throne. Their meaning is indicated by saying that they are the seven spirits of God (see i: 4 and iii: 1). These doubtless represent the Holy Spirit.

C. What appeared to be a sea of glass was before the throne. John sees in front of the throne and its Occupant a vast glassy pavement. It was clear as rock-crystal. Often the sea around Patmos had appeared as smooth as glass on calm summer days. When we remember the high cost of ancient glass and its semi-opaque nature, this vast pavement of the clearest glass adds much to the magnificence of the scene and consequently to the majesty of its Central Figure.

5. The four living creatures. "And in the midst . . . eyes before and behind."

A. Probably Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. i: 5ff) is in the author's mind though its complexities are largely abandoned.

B. The exact position of the living creatures is not easy to determine, whether inside or outside the circle of the twenty-four elders, how distributed around the throne, whether moving in rapid gyrations or standing still, etc. Probably the simplest and most reasonable view is that one is in front, another behind, and one at each side of the throne. They were probably standing comparatively still as nothing is said to indicate that they were in motion, while in Ezekiel's vision (i: 14) the motion is clearly indicated. A comparison of the expression by which their position is indicated—"in the midst of the throne and round about the throne,"—with the words describing the position of the elders,—"round the throne,"—would appear to

indicate a position between the circle of the elders and the throne, as it is not said that the elders were "in the midst of the throne."

C. The living creatures are full of eyes before and behind, round about and within (vs. 8). Each has six wings about him, though their position and use is not indicated (cf. Isa. vi: 2).

D. In the absence of any indication in the text as to the significance of these four living creatures, we can only guess at their meaning. Little help can be got from a comparison with Ezekiel's vision as there are so many differences in detail, though probably in the main they present the same ideas. Probably the most reasonable view is that suggested by Prof. C. Anderson Scott (Revelation p. 158f) that they are the personification of the forces set in order by the will of God whereby His throne is supported, His authority maintained. This view is followed to some extent by Prof. H. B. Swete who thinks they represent animate nature in its different phases, the lion suggesting what is noblest, the calf or ox (μόσχος, a young bull), what is strongest, the man what is wisest, and the eagle what is swiftest. They represent, so Dr. Swete thinks, Creation and the Divine Immanence in nature. The eyes set forth the ceaseless vigilance of nature, or rather of the Divine Power working through nature; the wings represent its velocities.

6. Worship. "And day and night . . . and were created."

A. These living creatures are continually worshipping God th. whole twenty-four hours of each day and seven days a week. Animate Nature is continually active and that activity is a ceaseless tribute of praise.

B. Their song of praise is one which recognizes Him as holy, all powerful, and eternal. The words have a close analogy to those of Isaiah's vision (Isa. vi: 3) but they are not exactly the same.

C. The living creatures are joined in their song of praise by the twenty-four elders and the actions of the two are simultaneous, "Nature and the Church must ever unite in praise to God." The future tenses of the verbs (δώσουσιν, πεσοῦνται) are difficult but not inexplicable. They are in all probability the correct readings. The words state the fact as if it were a law.

D. The tribute of praise offered by the living creatures and

that given by the elders differ somewhat in detail, while alike in spirit and general character. The words of the living creatures praise Him as holy, omnipotent, and eternal, call Him Lord and God, and are brief; those of the elders are more elaborate and praise Him as worthy to receive glory, honor, and power, as the Creator of all things according to whose will they exist and were created, and by the use of the word "our" recognize a personal relationship to Him. As they do this they rise from their seats, fall down (probably on their knees) and prostrate themselves before the Occupant of the central throne in expression of the fullest homage and reverence. This they emphasize by casting their crowns before Him and thus pledging their fidelity to Him in the very strongest way. These crowns were wreaths (*στεφάνους*) and indicated victory, joy, festal gladness, etc., and not crowns signifying royalty (*διάδημα*). The living creatures ascribe glory, honor, and thanks to the Occupant of the throne. Glory (*δόξαν*, Hebrew כבוד) refers to the outward magnificence, honor (*τιμὴν*) to inherent excellence of God, while thanks (*εὐχαριστίαν*) has in mind His gifts and mercy.

E. The Occupant of the central throne (vs. 4) is thus clearly defined. He is worshipped as thrice holy, omnipotent, eternal (both as the One who was and is and is to come, and the One who lives unto the ages of the ages). He is the One to whom glory, honor and power are ascribed and thanks given, the One before whom the elders bow in worship and at whose feet they lay their crowns of victory and joy, the One by whose will all things exist and were created, the One whom the living creatures recognize as Lord and God and whom the elders worship as "our Lord and our God." Such a description as this can suit only one Being in the universe and that One can be no other than Jehovah, the Supreme God, Creator of heaven and earth.

7. The general significance of this chapter is very plain though there may be room for much difference of opinion regarding the meaning of many of the details. The churches were grievously oppressed. How could they expect to win out in their struggle with the Empire? To human minds it was apparently impossible. But these verses show that the Supreme Power is not in the earth but in Heaven. It is a glimpse of the real Imperial Power which was in Heaven and not that

earthly caricature of it which the Empire presented. When the veil is drawn and a true view of the real nature of the situation can be gained, it is plain that the real Sovereign and Ruler is God who has created all things and by whose will they exist. He is the Person of matchless excellence and to Him heaven and earth give fealty and praise. The picture is one of matchless splendor. Some of the details, such as the sea of glass, appear to be added to give color to it and not to represent anything in particular. The encouragement and hope which such a revelation as this would inspire in the Asian churches, engaged in a life and death struggle with the political power, and persecuted even unto the death, must have been great indeed.

XIII

The Sealed Book and the Lamb. V: 1-14.

1. The sealed book. "And I saw . . . with seven seals."

A. In this chapter we have a continuation of the description begun in the previous chapter. John again looks at the central throne and its Occupant, and observes in His hand a book or roll sealed down with seven seals, the contents of which were so abundant that they not only filled the inside but overflowed to the reverse. The roll is not offered to John to read, nor to anyone else.

B. What is this sealed roll or book? The idea is apparently based on Ezek. ii: 9. Various suggestions have been offered as to its meaning. Several ancient expositors held it to be the Old Testament, unsealed by the coming and teaching of Christ or the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, but such a view is inconsistent with the process of opening the seals given in ch. vi and vii. There are several things that indicate its true significance. First. There is the fact that it is a *sealed* book, sealed with seven seals, i. e. completely, which no one in heaven, upon earth, or under the earth is able to open nor even to look upon. Second. It is in the hand of God. Third. Christ is able to open it (vs. 5ff and notes). Fourth. There is the purpose of the Apocalypse, "to show to His servants what must quickly come to pass" (i: 1) and "the things that shall be hereafter" (i: 19). Fifth. The events that accompany the opening of the seals are manifestly symbolic and their character is such that it cannot be discerned until the events actually take place; Sixth. To the Christians of the province of Asia there would be one thing that could be considered as pre-eminently a sealed book and that was the future. How they and the Church would fare was to them the problem of greatest urgency, most intense interest, and highest importance. These considerations would appear to point to only one interpretation. The sealed book is the book of the future, the Book of Destiny and a moment's thought shows how well such a view meets the conditions. No one in heaven or earth or under the earth could decipher the future before hand for it is in the hand of God, and only the

one whom He equips for the purpose and appoints to the task can discharge that duty, and Christ is such an one, par excellence. The Apocalypse, claiming to be "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to show to His servants what must quickly come to pass (i: 1)," is an authoritative and reliable account of what the future has in store for the suffering Asian churches and therefore able to meet its need at this time as nothing else could.

2. The book unopened. "I saw a strong angel . . . to look on it."

A. The challenge is issued by a strong angel, and as the challenge is addressed to the whole universe a strong angel is needed. It is worthiness (ἄξιος), not strength, that is required for the task.

B. There is no response to the challenge. Nowhere is there anyone who dares to attempt such a task. The reason is manifest if the interpretation of the book given above is accepted. No one is able to look on it. None could consider, much less attempt to unfold the future.

C. John evidently perceives clearly the nature of the sealed book. He weeps much as no one appears to open it. If it is unopened he will have no message regarding the future to give to his suffering fellow-Christians and the promise of the voice that bade him "ascend hither" in iv: 1 will be unfulfilled. He knew the times were troublous and the future uncertain and terrible. In these awful days when political conditions were bad in the extreme, when religion and morals were vile and every indication pointed to the extinction of the Christians, any serious person might weep as he contemplated the future. No wonder then that John weeps when no one is found able to unfold the future and guide him and his suffering fellow-Christians through the evil time.

3. One found able to open it. "And one of the elders . . . throne."

A. John continues to weep profusely (ἔκλαιον πολύ) until he is bidden to refrain from doing so by one of the elders. Here and in vii: 13 the fact that the elder speaks appears to have no symbolic significance beyond enriching the color and details of the picture.

B. The command to desist from his weeping is accompanied by an explanation which shows it to be unnecessary. The Lion

of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has overcome to open the book and its seven seals. John looks and sees in the circle of the throne, living creatures, and elders, though its position is not more definitely indicated, not a lion but a lamb standing as if slain, but apparently alive, and possessing seven horns and seven eyes. He takes the book from the hand of Him who sat on the throne.

C. Who is this creature? What could be described fairly as at once the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David and a lamb standing as if slaughtered. As we meditate upon the picture it is plain that only One Person can meet its requirements and that One is Jesus Christ. First. He belonged to the tribe of Judah (Luke iii: 33) which was spoken of as the lion of the tribes in the Blessing of Jacob (Gen. xlix: 9), and of all the noble sons of that tribe none were as noble and excellent as He and none therefore as worthy of the name. Second. Jesus was also of the tribe and lineage of David (Luke iii: 31); the words of the passage are evidently based on Isa. xi: 1. The stump of the old Davidic tree has sent forth a new shoot, its finest and best. Third. Jesus would be familiar to the Christians of that time also as a Lamb (John i: 29, 36, Acts viii: 32, 1 Pet. i: 19 and especially Isa. liii: 7 to which the Apocalyptist's thought doubtless goes back). He had been slain and yet was alive. Fourth. In verse 9 the Lamb is praised by the great heavenly host not only because He was slain but because of His redemptive work. This fourfold requirement Christ meets, and we know of no other whose name would be familiar to the Christians of the Seven Cities of Asia and the church in the province generally who could meet them fairly in any sense. a striking contrast, but it suggests the unique combination of majesty and meekness that characterized Christ. This Lamb though He has been slain has overcome. In spite of all the features in the picture of Him that suggest weakness, submission, obedience, meekness, death, there is left on our minds the suggestion of extraordinary strength. He is a Lion and a Root. The Lamb has seven horns, the symbol of perfect strength and the indication of the completeness of His strength as the Victorious Christ (cf. Matt. xxviii: 18, John xvii: 2). The horn is an old Hebrew figure for strength and is found frequently with that sense in the earlier books of the Old Testament (e. g. Deut. xxxiii: 17, 1 Sam. ii: 1, 10, 1 Kings xxii: 11, Ps.

xviii: 2, cxii: 9), but in the later books sometimes it signifies political or military power (e. g. Zech. i: 21, Dan. vii: 7ff, viii: 3ff). The Lamb has also seven eyes which are interpreted as the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. With perfection of strength He also possesses perfection of vision symbolized by the seven eyes. In ch. iv: 5 the spirit of God is represented by the seven lamps; as lamps they are stationary, while as eyes they have a mission in all the earth. The reference is no doubt to Zech. iii: 9 and iv: 10. The penetrating power of the eyes of Christ is indicated in ch. i: 14, ii: 18.

D. Here then we have Christ represented by an extraordinary combination of symbols, which could be fairly used in combination of none other. Although the combination is one that exhibits many varied aspects it yet leaves upon our mind the impression of Him as a remarkable and extraordinary Being, remarkable for strength and prowess which He achieves even through meekness and death. Little wonder that the language, even of an inspired man seems inadequate to describe such a scene and such a Person.

4. The burst of praise. "And when he took the book . . . for ever and ever." Vs. 8-13.

A. When Christ takes the book the representatives of the animal world and of the universal Church fall before Him. Each elder is now seen to have a harp and golden bowls. Probably the living creatures did not have any, for while the words (ἔξοντες ἕκαστος) might include them it is hardly befitting that the living creatures should be connected with the prayers of saints. The harp was the common instrument of praise in Old Testament times (Ps. xxxiii: 2, xcviii: 5, cxlvii: 7, cl: 3, 2 Sam. vi: 5, 1 Chron. xxv: 3, etc.). The golden bowls were full of incense, which is clearly indicated as symbolical by the remark that it is the prayers of saints. Incense was an adjunct of worship among the Jews in Old Testament times (Ex. xxxvii: 29) and was therefore intimately connected with prayer (Ps. cxli: 2). As the elders represent the Church it is fitting that they should have the harps and offer the incense, thus symbolizing the Church's tribute of praise and prayer to Christ as indicated by the harps and incense respectively.

B. They sing a new song (cf. Isa. xlii: 10, Ps. xxxiii: 3, xl: 3, xcvi: 1, xcviii: 1, etc.). "Originally denoting only a fresh song of praise the phrase lent itself especially to songs

composed for great occasions. . . . In the Apocalypse it is appropriately used for the Church's praise of redemption" (cf. xiv: 3) (Swete, Apocalypse p. 80, who says, further, that it answers the new name of ii: 17 and iii: 12, the New Jerusalem of iii: 12 and xxi: 2, the new heaven and new earth of xxi: 1 and all things new of xxi: 5, of the great Christian prophecy).

C. Christ is recognized by the elders as possessing that absolute worthiness which qualifies Him to take the Book of Destiny and open its seals. His worthiness is due, according to their song, to His death and what He accomplished by it. He was slain, and the word (ἐσφάγης) is used of the death of Christ only in this book (where it occurs in v: 6, 9, 12 and xiii: 8), but it is interesting to find that it is used also by our author of those who have been slain in martyrdom in the churches of Asia (vi: 9, xviii: 24). The redemption is spoken of as a purchase, a description of it that would be familiar from the use of the term in 1 Cor. vi: 20, vii: 23, 2 Pet. ii: 1 and a compound of it in Gal. iii: 13 and iv: 5. The purchase was made by means of His blood, (or at the price of His blood) and it was to God and was from every tribe without exception of race, language, or people, elevating those redeemed individually to be His priests, and as a body to be His Kingdom (cf. i: 6 and xx: 6), and already they reign on the earth. The tense of the verb here (βασιλεύουσιν) is doubtful, the most important manuscripts fluctuating between the present and the future. Here probably we should choose the present (and more difficult reading), as do Westcott and Hort as well as Swete, though we have the future in xx: 6 and xxii: 5. Those whom He has redeemed actually rule now on earth.

D. With vs. 11 a new feature of the vision appears. A vast crowd of angels appears in the circle of the throne, living creatures, and elders. Their vast number,—myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,—would seem to require a position outside the circle of the living creatures, and elders, though there is nothing to indicate more exactly just where they are. Nor are we told whether their words were spoken contemporaneously with those of the elders and the living creatures or otherwise, though the fact that John hears them so distinctly and mentions them after the others would suggest that their words of praise were spoken after those of the elders. The numerical description is apparently based on Dan. vii: 10 (cf. Deut.

xxxiii: 2, Ps. lxviii: 17). The sound is a great voice (φωνή) and is a shout rather than a song; the host of angels merely acclaim the Lamb as worthy to receive power (δύναμιν), wealth (πλοῦτον), wisdom (σοφίαν), strength (ἰσχὺν), honor (τιμὴν), glory (δόξαν), and praise (εὐλογίαν), referring to Him as "the Lamb that was slain." The united praise of the living creatures and elders is called a song and harps are mentioned. But if it is only a shout of acclamation the attributes which it ascribes to Him form a complete heptad and thus suggest that nothing is wanting.

E. Still other sounds he hears and recognizes clearly though apparently he does not see the source from which they come. Their source is the whole of creation—every creature in heaven, earth, hades, and the sea, forming a gathering that is no longer representative, but takes in everything, animate and inanimate, in all departments of creation. Of the four attributes three are the same as those of the angels acclaim in vs. 12, while the fourth substitutes another word for strength (κράτος instead of ἰσχύς) and in addition there is the intimation that this is not merely for a time but forever.

5. The Amen. "And the four . . . worshipped." Vs. 14. It would appear that this stage of the proceedings is concluded with the word "Amen" from the four beasts who had begun the series of utterances. But after their closing word is a final act of homage on the part of the elders.

6. The general significance of this section is now very plain. The book sealed with seven seals in the hand of God is the Book of Destiny, the book of the future so completely closed that no one can open it but Christ who alone is worthy, and whom all creation acknowledges because He has redeemed the Church by His death. To the Christians of Asia this would be again a source of comfort and help. It was not to the emperor of Rome or his power that they must look and trust for the future, but to Christ who alone, as God's chosen, could enable them to face it with confidence, and even though they might have suffering and death to meet, yet with Him to lead them they would be safe whatever came.

XIV

The Unsealing of the Book. The Opening of the First Six Seals. Vi: 1-17.

The Book of Destiny is now in the hand of Christ who proceeds to break the seals one by one, the opening of each being followed by some remarkable and significant appearance. The first four seal-openings form a series in themselves (vs. 1-8); the opening of each is accompanied by the word "Come" uttered in thunder tones by one of the living creatures, and this is followed in each case by a horse and rider, the meaning of which is suggested but not definitely given. This word "Come" (ἔρχου) has generally been understood as addressed to John, and therefore some texts have added the words "and see" (καὶ ἴδε) but if this were the case we would expect first, the word δεῦρο (hither, come) instead of ἔρχου and second, some indication that John changed his position, neither of which we have. Probably also the seer bases his picture here on Zech. vi: 1ff.

1. The opening of the first seal. "And I saw . . . conquer."

A. In the first seal the horse is white, his rider carries a bow and has received a crown, (στέφανος, wreath of victory); it is to be specially noted that he goes forth as a conqueror and with the purpose of making further conquests (ἵνα νικήσῃ not ὡς νικήσων).

B. There has been a strong tendency among interpreters to identify this rider with the one in ch. xix: 11ff whose name is called "The Word of God," but the two have so little in common that this is impossible, the color of the horse being the only common feature. There we have a picture of the victorious Christ, but it seems too soon to present Christ here as a conqueror especially as He has been presented just before as a lamb that had been slain. The bow, however, marks the distinctive character of the symbol as Parthian. The Romans never adopted the bow as a weapon of war and it was not used except by a few auxiliaries levied among tribes that used it as their weapon. But it was the weapon of the Parthians who were such expert

horsemen that they could use it as well when they were retreating as when they were advancing. They were such a terror in the east that their incursions were continually dreaded. So much was this the case that in A. D. 115 the emperor Trajan undertook a war against them. Another important feature was the color. The Parthian conqueror rides a white horse. White was the sacred color of the old Persians for whom the Parthians stood in later times, and sacred white horses always accompanied the Persian army. In the Roman triumphal procession the victorious general did not ride a white horse but was seated in a four horse car wearing, not the white toga but the purple and gold embroidered robes of Jupiter. Yet white was the color of victory and the horses that drew the quadriga (4 horse car) were sometimes white. Swete, Apoc. 86 and Ramsay, Letters 58).

C. It is clear then that the picture is one of a Parthian king or warrior, but what does it signify? The whole picture suggests invasion or conquest. The crown, bow, the spirit and purpose of the rider,—conquering and to conquer,—all indicate this, as well as the fact that the Parthians at this time were the dreaded conquerors on the east. But there are still two ways in which the picture may be understood; first, it may be a picture of the Empire outwardly victorious like the Parthian warriors, filled with the thirst for victory and with many victories already achieved. Or second, it may be the Empire as a victim of the spirit of conquest by the Parthians or others. The first of these we may discard because the next three seal openings do not fit it well and more especially because there is so little in the symbol itself that appears to be distinctly Roman. If it were desired to picture Rome as a conquering power the more natural representation would be a triumphal scene in Rome—a victorious general clad in the robes of Jupiter, seated in the four horse car drawn by white horses with perhaps some conquered kings chained to the chariot behind which they were forced to walk. We are therefore left with the second as the more likely interpretation. The symbol then pictures the Empire as attacked by outside powers flushed by victories already achieved against it and bent on further successes. And while the conqueror is pictured as a Parthian it is not necessary to think that they only are attacking the Empire. Indeed it may be that the meaning intended is that the Empire is beset by

outside tribes bent on conquest and that the Parthians are not one of these. This however is not likely, the most reasonable interpretation is that the Parthian warrior represents a considerable array of outside military forces of which the Parthians were the chief and most characteristic, successfully attacking the Empire and bent on further conquest. The reason for viewing the Empire as the object of attack will appear later.

2. The opening of the second seal. "And when . . . a great sword was given to him."

A. As the first rider vanishes a second rider goes forth; this time his horse is blood red (*πυρρός*). He possesses a great sword and has power to plunge the earth into war. The sword here mentioned (*μάχαιρα*) may be either a knife carried in a sheath at the girdle (cf. John xviii: 10, 11) or a sword for use in war. The fact that this rider has power to take peace from the earth and incite to slaughter indicates that his sword is of the latter variety.

B. The significance of this picture is plain. It can reasonably be understood only as a picture of War and perhaps Civil War. Victory and Conquest look very beautiful as they go forth but they bear a different aspect when we view them from the field of battle. The Empire was engaged in continuous warfare from the early days of its existence until long after the first Christian century and only twice was it at peace in this long period. First in the early days, and secondly when Christ was born; and these wars were of all classes.

3. The opening of the third seal. "And when he opened . . . injure not."

A. With the opening of the third seal another horse goes forth, this time black in color. The rider carries the beam of a pair of scales. A voice is heard proclaiming "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and the oil and the wine injure not." The word measure (*χοῖνιξ*) here means a measure of about one and a half or two pints, a slave's daily ration of corn, and enough for a day's provision for a man of moderate appetite. The penny (*δηνάριον*) was a silver coin worth 8½ d. or 16 2-3 cts. of our money and was an average wage for a day laborer. This means that food was to be at famine prices. There were luxuries, oil and wine, which were not to be touched, a fact which would make the scarcity all the more severe.

B. The meaning of this also is so plain that no comment is needed to decipher it. We have here a picture of famine that is severe and intensified by aggravated conditions.

4. The opening of the fourth seal. "And when . . . beasts of the earth."

A. The fourth seal is opened and a fourth horse goes forth, this time of a pale yellowish color, bearing a rider whose name is Death. He is accompanied by Hades (ὁ ἅδης the abode of the dead, the grave), but we are not told whether on foot, on the same horse, or on another horse. To these two is given the power to visit a quarter of the earth with death in various forms. Their power is much more extensive than that of any of their predecessors; their sphere of operations is large.

B. The significance of the symbol is easily seen. It pictures the usual accompaniments of war and famine, in which Death is busy in various forms and the grave receives a rich harvest. These forms are indicated as four; the sword (ῥομφαίᾳ), famine (λιμῷ), death (Θανάτῳ, which here probably means death by disease or plague), and by the wild beasts (Θηρίων). These suggest the forms of depopulation that follow upon war, famine, pestilence, and the encroachment of wild beasts, and thus are specially suitable to the context. Possibly the writer has in mind the four sore judgments of Ezek. xiv: 21. This seal-opening may then be described as signifying plague or pestilence.

5. The fifth seal is opened. "And when . . . completed."

A. An altar now for the first time appears in the scene and under it the souls of those who have died by persecution on account of their faith. Their suffering is aggravated by the fact that God seems to let it pass unavenged. They are robed in white and counselled to rest for a little time until the dark hour is past.

B. The symbol of the altar and the souls beneath it appears to be based on Levitical rites. The altar suggests sacrifice and the victims are those who have been put to death because of their faithfulness. Their souls are "under the altar;" in the Levitical rite the blood was looked upon as the life or soul (Lev. xvii: 11, cf. Gen. ix: 4), and in the sacrifices the blood was poured out at the foot of the altar (Lev. iv: 7). They had been slain because of "the word of God and the witness which they

had." This phrase occurs with slight variations in ch. i: 9, xii: 11, 17, xix: 10, xx: 4. The repetition of the preposition (διὰ) would suggest a distinction between these phrases, and in that case the former would indicate the God-ward side of their faith and the latter the man-ward side,—on the one side faith and loyalty to God, on the other activity in bearing testimony to the world. Polycarp (Mart. 9) was required to meet a double test; first, recognize Caesar; and second, curse Christ. The sacrificed lives of the martyrs are a strong demand for avengement on the pagan world from God, whom they call Lord (δεσπότης), and address as holy and true. Of the present condition of the martyrs it is to be noted; first, they have each individually (ἑκάστῳ) received a white robe, the symbol, apparently, of purity and victory (cf. iii: 4f, iv: 4, vii: 9, 13f, xix: 14). Second, they are told to be at rest a little while until the number of their fellowservants and brethren is complete. This number is to include both their fellowservants, (i. e. their fellow-Christians generally), and the rest of the martyrs, who are described here as their brethren.

C. The significance of this seal-opening is plainly Martyrdom, or Persecution further aggravated by the fact that there seems to be no sign of interest in their sufferings on the part of God.

6. The sixth seal is opened. "And I saw . . . able to stand." Vs. 12-17.

A. As the sixth seal is opened John observes a series of upheavals in nature at which the people of the world are smitten with terror. These words bear a striking analogy to those of Jesus in (Mark xiii: 24, 25, cf. Matt. xxiv: 29).

B. Of phenomena in nature several are mentioned. A great earthquake takes place. The people of Asia knew well the terrors of such events and again and again they had suffered from them. The darkening of the sun would be caused by an eclipse, but the people of that day, entirely ignorant of scientific phenomena, would look upon it as a direful omen. The discoloration of the moon might be due to atmospheric conditions. The falling of the stars was like a meteoric shower which, to ignorant people of that day, would be an event inspiring terror in its beholders. The heavens seemed to part and roll up. Under some circumstances the sweeping of storm clouds over the sky might produce an appearance of this sort. The moving of the

mountains and islands sometimes occurred. But while these phenomena or what looked like them doubtless appeared frequently in nature the words indicate a continuation of them unparalleled in its severity, and such as had never before been experienced. The result is that all classes of the earth's inhabitants are smitten with fear beyond description. Seven conditions of life are named covering the whole fabric of human society, kings, magnates, chief captains, rich men, strong men, slaves, and free men, all of whom flee to the mountains and desire to be hidden by them from the wrath of God and Christ because they know that the day of judgment has arrived. The kings of the earth are the rulers of states inimical to Christ, especially the Cæsars. The magnates are those high in authority generally in the world. The chief captains are those high in authority in the army. These three classes are all classes of people in authority. But their high position will not save them from terror in the presence of God and His Son. Those who possess wealth and physical strength will likewise find no immunity from fear. Also slaves and free men, those separated by the deepest class distinction in ancient life, will huddle together in their efforts to escape the just judgments of God. Pictures like this are common in apocalyptical descriptions of the last day (e. g. Assumption of Moses x: 5f and cf. Joel ii: 31).

C. How are we to understand this? A discussion of the whole seven seal-openings is needed to show its exact meaning and significance. But for the present let us bear in mind that it is symbolic, and evidently indicates conditions or events that inspire to great fear and to the conviction that a day of judgment was at hand. There have been times in history when the conscience of men led them to believe in the imminence of approaching judgment. The significance of this seal-opening is then, Portents of Judgment.

7. Before the book is entirely opened there is a stay in the proceedings to permit the sealing of the servants of God. This will be the subject of the next section.

8. The seventh seal is opened. Viii: 1, but as only an half-hour's silence follows it we need not stop to discuss it further at present.

9. The question that now presses for an answer is; what is the significance of these seal openings, and to that we must give

our attention.

A. We must remember in the first place that they cannot be the contents of the Book of Destiny in the hand of the Lamb as the book is written within and on the back side and cannot be opened until the seven seals are all broken.

B. While it is plain that the seal openings and the phenomena following them are symbolical we are not left entirely without indications as to what they signify. The first of these that we note is in vs. 4 "to take peace *from the earth.*" Then in vs. 8 "over the fourth *of the earth* to kill with sword and with hunger and with death and by the wild beasts *of the earth.*" In vs. 9-11 the picture is one of persecution and martyrdom. He sees the souls, "of those slain for the word of God and for the witness which they had," and he hears them enquire "How long . . . dost thou not judge and avenge our blood *on those that dwell on the earth?*" It is plain then that those who dwell on the earth are the persecutors and those persecuted "for the word of God and for the witness which they had," must be also "on the earth." This is confirmed by the words of vs. 11 "until their fellow-servants and their brethren *who were to be killed as they also were,* should be completed." Furthermore, the phenomena described in verses 12 and 13 were such as individually were often seen in the world, while the people mentioned in vs. 15 are all "of the earth." We notice furthermore that while the whole scene is represented as in heaven (iv: 1) yet the phenomena that appear as following the seal openings are almost always such as were more or less familiar to human beings, e. g. the rider and his bow (vs. 2), and the rider with his sword (vs. 4), the rider with the weigh beam (vs. 5), the accompanied rider (vs. 8), the wheat, barley, oil, wine, and denarius (vs. 6), the sword, famine, death, and beasts (vs. 8), the altar, the word of God, testimony, and martyrdom (vs. 9), impatience or anxiety and avengement (vs. 10), the white robes, the intimation to wait, and the further reference to martyrdom (vs. 11), the earthquake, sun and moon (vs. 12), the stars (vs. 13), mountain, island, and sky (vs. 14), different classes of people (vs. 15), and their terror (vs. 16), etc.

C. Of course there is much that is not familiar and natural, such as the very figure of a sealed book given to a lamb; the beasts and their weird call "Come" four times repeated; the four riders on different colored horses following one another,

and in some cases at least, the powers ascribed to them; souls under the altar, and their cry, attire, etc.; the awful combination of natural phenomena following the opening of the sixth seal, etc. But we must remember that we are dealing with an apocalypse and this is the ordinary style of such writings. We may ascribe such extraordinary and unnatural pictures then to the literary character of the book and look upon them as in some degree at least the scenery and clothing in which the writer presents his message. It is true they are apt to confuse the modern interpreter but we may be sure that they did not obscure the message to its readers and hearers in the first century. They served two valuable purposes also, first, they effectively obscured the writer's meaning from the enemies of the Church, and second, they added much to the impressiveness of the message to the Church.

D. There is one verse, however, that apparently points with unmistakable clearness to the true interpretation, i. e. vs. 17, "because the great day of their wrath has come and who is able to stand?" In our endeavor to understand these words let us remember that the book is not yet open for the seventh seal has not yet been loosed but these words occur after the sixth seal is opened. The words are plain and definite. They evidently mean the day of divine judgment—that day, "has come, and who is able to stand?" The reference must plainly be to the events in the immediate future. But if the seals refer to the Empire,—Babylon—her judgment is not depicted till we reach chapter xvii: 1, though in xiv: 8 her fall is announced. As the Book of Destiny is yet unopened, and the judgment is not described until a much later chapter; and further, as the whole sequence of the book would be spoiled by bringing that judgment in here we must conclude that the words of verse 17 are an intimation that those who speak them are convinced that *the time of judgment is at hand though they have not yet entered it,* not even its first stages for the earth is not to be hurt until the servants of God have been sealed (vii: 3). But things have come to a pass that forces the belief that the great day of the wrath of God *is at hand.*

E. The way is now cleared so that we may see what the seals do really signify. While the vision is in heaven it relates to things on earth (iv: 1),—that shall be hereafter. God has been shown as supreme in chapter iv and Christ as the One to whom

the future is entrusted in the world in chapter v. Now in chapter vi we begin to see things on the earth. The seals clearly refer to contemporary circumstances and events. Invasion, war, famine, plague, persecution, were happening every day in some part of the Empire and could not be ignored. Those to whom John wrote were very familiar with them. They knew of the Parthian terror, and of the horrors of war, famine, pestilence, and earthquakes, while they felt keenly the pains of persecution. These things, with continually recurring convulsions of nature, led to the common belief that the time of divine vengeance had come. The Jews believed that the age would conclude with terrible upheavals of nature, and Jesus prophesied that before His coming there should appear extraordinary phenomena in the heavens, while the book of Acts and the epistles of St. Paul have much to say on the same subject.

F. The opening of the seals, then, is a revelation of the actual condition of the Empire as it is unfolded to the seer in Patmos, a condition which is really the very opposite of what it seemed to be in that day. Outwardly the Empire seemed to be supreme, victorious, and able to maintain itself for the future against any enemies that might arise, but really it was beset by many disintegrating forces which were making heavy inroads on its strength. Upon it is to come very soon the abundant wrath and judgment of God. The Church, too, is really triumphant and victorious though beset by such severe persecution that the future seems to have little hope. The encouragement and hope that this would inspire in the poor persecuted Christians of Asia must have been great indeed.

XV

Safety and Blessedness of the Servants of God. Chapter vii: 1-17.

1. The sixth chapter closes with a picture of the inhabitants of the world smitten with terror as they are forced to the conviction that the day of divine judgment is at hand. But the question will naturally arise as to what is to be the fortune of the people of God in that time. To this question the seventh chapter gives the answer.

2. The first vision. "After this I saw . . . twelve thousand were sealed." Vs. 1-8.

A. The earth is ripe for the blasts of judgment. It is regarded as quadrangular and an angel stands at each of its four corners holding back the winds so that all outbreaks of their fury may be prevented till the proper time. Another angel ascends from the sunrising, i. e. the east, having the seal of the living God, and he calls out to them to do no injury to the earth until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads. This is done and John hears that 144,000 are sealed of all the tribes of the Israelites. Strange to say the tribe of Dan is omitted from this list, but the tribe of Manasseh (who is not given as one of the sons of Jacob in the list in Gen. xxxv: 22ff) is inserted so that we have twelve tribes still given. The most probable reason for the omission is found in a Rabbinical tradition that the Messiah was to arise out of the tribe of Judah but the Anti-Messiah ("Antichrist") from the tribe of Dan, and this opinion became so strong that some Rabbis denied this tribe any share in Israel's future glories. The tribe of Dan was associated in Rabbinical writings with idolatry and apostasy, perhaps because of the narrative in Judges viii, or a misunderstanding of Gen. xlix: 17, while there was a late Christian tradition that the Antichrist should belong to this tribe. Probably, however we should regard the variation as of no consequence in view of the frequent variations in the lists of tribes. The names and number of the tribes varies considerably in the different lists as found in Gen. xxix—xxxv, xlvi, xlix, Ex. i, Num. i: 1-15, i: 20ff, ii—x, xiii, xxvi, xxxiv, Deut. xxvii, xxxiii, Josh. xiiiff, Judges v, Ezek. xlviii, 1 Chron. ii: 1-2, ii: 3—viii, xii,

xxvii, Rev. vii. Here we have twenty lists, all different. These lists are all given in a tabulated form in Hasting's D. B. IV, p. 811. The chief reason for putting Judah first in the list in our text would seem to be that it was the tribe from which Christ came. The insertion of Manasseh was necessary to make up the twelve, and Manasseh was chosen apparently because he was one of the two grandsons of Jacob that gave their names to tribes.

B. The general significance of the passage is plain. It is, that provision is made specially for the servants of God so that they will be safe whatever may happen. The outpouring of Judgment is not permitted until this is done. This idea of sealing would be very suggestive to those familiar with the Old Testament who would recall how Cain was marked lest anyone meeting him should kill him (Gen. iv: 15) and how in Ezekiel's vision (ix: 1-11) those who were marked escaped. The idea of a sealing doubtless was familiar to John's readers from its frequent mention in the books of the New Testament (see 2 Cor. i: 22, Eph. i: 13, John vi: 27, 2 Tim. ii: 19). The mark on their forehead became a guarantee of their safety in the day of judgment. They possessed a life that the forces of judgment could not destroy. There has been considerable discussion as to whether the apocalyptist intends the 144,000 sealed Israelites to include merely the elect of Israel, (cf. Rom. xi: 5), the Jewish Christians (as Victorinus), or the whole number of the faithful, (as Primasius and Bede). In verse 4 it is distinctly stated that the 144,000 sealed are from "every tribe of the children of Israel," and the names of the tribes follow, while the vision of vs. 9-17 mentions distinctly "a great crowd, which no one could number, of every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues." We must remember however—first, that there is a tendency in this book to regard the Church as the real Israel (cf. e. g. ii: 9, iii: 9ff) and second, that the same number is used in ch. xiv: 1, 3, for those who follow the Lamb, and nothing is said as to whether they are Jews or not, while third, none are sealed but the 144,000 of Israel. If others were sealed and the writer wished to distinguish them from the Israelites he could easily have done so. These considerations seem to make only one conclusion possible; the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, and the 144,000 represent or symbolize the whole body of Christ's people of that day. The two num-

bers, twelve and one hundred and forty-four thousand signifying completeness. There has also been much discussion as to what the sealing actually meant. It could not be preservation from physical evil as many of the Christians suffer greatly in the judgments that follow, (cf. xi: 7ff, xiii: 15-17, xiv: 13, xvi: 6, xviii: 24). It seems plain that it did protect them from spiritual evil, or any real harm in their inner nature and true selves, either from the judgments of God on the evil world or from the activities of Satanic agents. They however, must do their part and remain faithful to Christ to continue to profit from this protection (iii: 10). In ix: 4, 5, we find that the swarm of locusts do not injure those sealed. It would seem (cf. notes on ix: 4, 5) that the locusts are Satanic agencies at work in the world whose king is Satan (ix: 11).

3. The great multitude. "After . . . tear from their eyes." Vs. 9-17.

A. While only the elders, living creatures, and angels hitherto have been seen in the presence of the Throne the seer now observes a great polyglot multitude there worshipping and praising God. They have come out of the great tribulation and have been redeemed by Christ.

B. The great multitude may be a reflection of the vast crowds that followed Christ in the days of His flesh (Mark iv: 1, v: 21, 24, Luke xii: 1, John vi: 2, xii: 9, 12) and there may be also an allusion to Gen. xv: 5 and xxxii: 12 (cf. Heb. xi: 12, and see also Gal. iii: 7, 8). The reference to all peoples of the world is a common one in this book, (cf. v: 9, xi: 9, xiii: 7, xiv: 6, xvii: 15). Palm branches were regarded as suitable for any occasion of joy or triumph; they were in evidence in Jesus' triumphal entry (John xii: 13). This great multitude, robed in white and bearing palm branches shouts its praise to God. The key note of this is in the word salvation (σωτηρία, cf. xii: 10 and xix: 1) and those who raise the song have all experienced the great deliverance which they ascribe to God and the Lamb (vs. 14). The cities of Asia frequently gave the title of Saviour (Σωτήρ) to the emperors but in the opinion of the Christians only God and Christ were worthy of the title (cf. 1 Tim. i: 1, ii: 3, Titus i: 3, 4, ii: 13, iii: 4, 6, John iv: 22, Acts iv: 12). This acclaim is endorsed by the angels who worship and add their doxology of praise as well (vs. 11, 12). Their exact position is not stated, but they form

a circle about the throne, and are probably identical with those of chapter v: 11. They address the Occupant of the throne whom they call their God (vs. 12) as did the great multitude (vs. 10). They do not include the Lamb however. They ascribe a seven fold tribute to Him (and each feature is emphasized by the article as in v: 12), but although each of its elements has occurred in previous doxologies the ascription as a whole does not exactly agree with any of them.

C. Doubtless John is anxious to know the significance of this great crowd but he makes no request for information. One of the elders however (as in v: 5) proceeds to interpret it for him. He begins by asking a question, which John doubtless had in mind. John replies in words that are at once a confession of ignorance and a request for information. The words may be based on Zech. iv: 2, 5. The elder then explains whom they are and whence they came. "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb." The expression "the great tribulation" at once so definite and so emphatic must refer to a well-defined and anxious period in the minds of all his readers. What this was is clear when we recall,—first, the references to it here and elsewhere in the book (e. g. iii: 10, vi: 9, etc.), second, the Church was then passing through a period of supreme trial which might be expected to continue for some time, (i: 9, ii: 9, 13, iii: 10, etc.), while third, as has been shown "the great day of their wrath" is come (vi: 17); we may then conclude that "the great tribulation" refers to the judgment described in the succeeding chapters which is now at hand. This of course is a picture of the time of severe trial and stress upon which the Church had entered, and a prophecy of its result. The expression "the great tribulation" no doubt is based on Dan. xii: 1. The whiteness of the robes of the great multitude is due to the blood of the Lamb in which they have been washed. The act is ascribed to the saints themselves who are not passive recipients of salvation but attain it by repentance and faith, and secure it by vigilance and victory (cf. xii: 11). Thus they have been fitted for the presence of God in which they are continually, and to Him they give unceasing worship. As their incentive and reward they have His perpetual presence, and supply for all their needs. Vs. 16 and 17 may have been suggested by Isa. xlix: 10 and xxv: 8 where the language is

very similar. We must conclude then that the great multitude is the whole Christian Church of the time in its heavenly relationship.

D. The language of this section and particularly of the last two verses is very comforting and amply sustains the influence it has exerted on all readers since the day it was penned in Patmos. The whole section (vs. 9-17) finds many parallels in the last two chapters of the book.

4. The two sections of this chapter present a series of striking contrasts. In the first section we have imagery that is strongly apocalyptic in character; in the second the imagery is based more directly on the Old Testament and is far more familiar. The first is more earthy, the second more heavenly in its nature. In the first the number of the sealed is limited though the number is symbolic and large, in the second it is so great that no one can accurately determine it. In the first the reference is to Israelites only; in the second to all peoples. In the first those who are sealed are "the servants of our God," in the second, the great multitude is made up of those "who come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb." In the first the concourse is being prepared for coming peril; in the second it is victorious and safe. The first presents Divine mercy and care as limited to a particular case and need; the second as unlimited and supplying all the need. The first makes no reference to Christ, the second represents all the benefits as obtained through Christ. But while there is striking contrast between the two parts of this chapter they are complementary rather than contradictory. The two parts describe the same body of people but from different points of view. Whether the reader were a Jewish Christian or a convert from heathenism the two sections would do more to encourage him and strengthen his faith than either could alone.

5. The meaning of the whole chapter is plain. The first part assures the Christians that God will take care of His own in the day of His judgment on the world; the second that full provision is made for all their needs through Christ and that they are in God's presence and continually render special service to Him. It is very plain that such words as these would be most powerful to inspire these poor persecuted Christians with courage and faith. To the human eye there was nothing be-

fore them but misery and death. But in the eye of Heaven the severe trials through which they were passing not only would be powerless to injure them in the sight of God but would be the means of equipping them for rendering Him more worthy service and would exalt them in His sight, while all their need would be supplied. Thus what they suffer and most fear becomes the means by which they attain the greater exaltation and glory through Christ.

XVI

The First Four of the Seven Trumpets. Chapter viii: 1-13.

1. The opening of the seventh seal. "And when . . . half an hour." Vs. 1.

A. The narrative interrupted by chapter vii is now resumed by the Lamb opening the last of the seals. But all is still. No elder, angel, or voice, offers any word of explanation. The silence continues for half an hour, which, though ordinarily a short time, would seem long in these circumstances. The silence is of course in the apocalyptical display and does not mean that the Divine activity had ceased on the earth.

B. Now that the seven seals are all opened, the book may be unrolled and read; strange to say we are not told that this was done. The question then arises as to where the seal openings end. Rev. J. T. Dean (Visions and Revelations, p. 96) believes that the "seven trumpets" are a part of the seal-openings. But there is even less to indicate their close at the blowing of the seventh trumpet than here. Nor are we told anywhere that the contents of the unsealed book are unfolded. But several considerations point to the answer of our question. First, the most natural time for the opening of the book is immediately after the seals have been unloosed. Secondly, the half hour's silence forms a very impressive break and the most natural indication that what follows is of supreme importance. Third, the purpose of this whole vision is to reveal the future (iv: 1) and that revelation is contained in the Book of Destiny (see chapter v: 1-5 notes) and its essential nature is judgment (vi: 17) which is seen to be in progress from this point onward (see especially chapter ix: 13 and xvi: 20, 21). The most natural point then for the seals to close and the contents of the book to begin is at this half-hour's silence.

2. "And I saw . . . them." Vs. 2.

Here we have the beginning of the vision of the seven trumpets. The article ("the" seven angels) seems to point to a well known heptad of angels that stood in the Divine Presence. Frequently in apocalyptical writings mention is made of such, (compare Tobit xii: 15, Enoch xx: 7). Trumpets are assigned to angels in Matt. xxiv: 31, 1 Cor. xv: 52, 1 Thess. iv:

16, etc., and probably goes back to the giving of the Law at Sinai (Ex. xix: 16ff, cf. also Jos. vi: 13 and Joel ii: 1).

3. The angel with the incense. "And another angel . . . earthquake." Vs. 3-5. Another angel, not one of the seven, came forward and took his place at the altar where he assumes the duty of the priest and offers abundant incense (cf. Luke i: 11). His censer is a golden one and the altar is the Altar of Incense rather than the Altar of Sacrifice (cf. vi: 9). Incense here and in v: 8 is plainly suggestive of prayer, and indicates that God is mindful of the prayers of His suffering people. But the angel puts the censer to a second use; it is filled with fire and cast into the earth. It is now used not for intercession but for judgment and no incense is added. The prayers of the saints return to the earth in the form of judgments which are signified by lightnings, thunderings, voices, and an earthquake. This scene forms an introduction to the seven trumpets which now get ready and begin to sound.

4. Preparation. "And the seven . . . sound." Vs. 6. They take their positions and place the instruments to their mouths. As in the case of the seal openings, so here the first four trumpet blasts form a closely connected group as more directly affecting inanimate nature, while the last three bring direct judgments to men. In the first four the forces of nature are set loose and great havoc is the result, while worse things are to follow in the last three. The imagery may have been suggested in part at least by the storms, eclipses, earthquakes, and military movements of the first century. As in the case of the seals, so here, we have a break between the sixth and seventh trumpets when the welfare of the Church is considered. The events accompanying the first four trumpet blasts bear striking similarity to the Plagues of Egypt as recorded in the Book of Exodus.

5. The first trumpet. "And the first . . . burned up." Vs. 7. The hail and fire mingled with blood recall Ex. ix: 23ff. The picture is that of a storm of intense fury such as sometimes occur in semi-tropical countries. A rain of mingled fire and blood is mentioned in the Silyline Oracles (v: 377). A shower of blood red rain is reported to have fallen in Italy and southern Europe in the spring of 1901, due, it was supposed to the air being full of fine red sand from the Sahara desert. The storm fell upon the earth with such fury that all green vegetation

was consumed as also were a third of the trees and a third of the earth's surface. This doubtless is not intended to be a scientifically accurate proportion but indicates merely a partial destruction. The trees are specially mentioned, as on them the inhabitants of Palestine and Asia Minor depend largely (cf. vii: 3).

6. The second trumpet. "And the second . . . wrecked." Vs. 8 and 9. As at the blast of the first trumpet the land is affected, now with the second it is the sea, when a huge mass like a great burning mountain seems to fall into it. The result is the death of a part of the creatures in the sea because of the effect it has on the waters. Here again the effect is partial. The picture may have been suggested by volcanic eruptions of which several are on record as having taken place in that part of the world before John wrote this book. Mount Vesuvius caused great destruction around the Bay of Naples in August A. D. 79. Strabo (i: 3, 16) tells of an eruption in B. C. 196 which resulted in the formation of a new island in the Aegean known afterwards as Palaea Kaumene. Or John may have obtained the suggestion from Enoch xviii: 13 where we read of "seven stars as a great burning mountain." In the first plague in Egypt (Ex. vii: 20ff) the fish died, but here there is the additional feature of the destruction of the boats due to the disturbance of the water.

7. The third trumpet. "And the third angel . . . bitter." Vs. 10 and 11. The fresh water supply is now visited by a meteor which flies across the sky like a huge torch (λαμπάς, cf. iv: 5) and falls into the rivers and sources of water. Its name is Wormwood and it changes a third of the water into that substance so that many people die from drinking it.

8. The fourth trumpet. "And the fourth . . . likewise." Vs. 12. Mankind further suffers by a visitation on the heavenly bodies, which reminds us of another of the Egyptian plagues (Ex. x: 21ff, cf. Amos viii: 9, Joel iii: 15). The plague of darkness lasted for three days but this darkness has no fixed duration though its extent is limited and its effect is partial. The usual rendering of the words of vs. 12 is that of the Authorized Version, "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." The

result of this translation is the inconsistency that the cause mentioned will not produce the effect ascribed to it. Of course this may be explained as a disregard for consistency on the part of the author in his desire to emphasize the partial nature of the calamity. But we might quite as well understand the words to mean that the day was reduced a third in brightness, and the night similarly, and consider the result of the darkening in day and night a matter of degree rather than a matter of time. This would avoid all inconsistency and be quite clear as well.

9. "And I saw . . . sound." Vs. 13. But worse things are yet to come with the three succeeding trumpet blasts. The seer observes an eagle flying in the midst of heaven and hears it announce the coming woes. The inconsistency of an eagle speaking intelligibly does not trouble him and it is permissible in an apocalypse. The bird flies in mid-heaven so as to be plainly seen and heard, which might not be the case if he flew near the earth.

XVII

The Fifth Trumpet or First Woe. Chapter ix: 1-12.

John sees a star that has fallen from heaven, which represents a person or rather an angel for the key of the abysmal pit (*φρέατος τῆς ἀβύσσου*) is given to him. Stars were often personified (cf. Judges v: 20). The Enoch literature has much to say of the "abyss" (Enoch xviii, xxi, xc, etc. Slavonic Enoch xxviii: 3). In this book the mouth of this pit is kept under lock and key, an angel having charge of the key (cf. xx: 1) who has power to open and shut the entrance at his pleasure, though this power is exercised only by permission ("it was given to him"—*ἐδόθη αὐτῷ*). He opens the mouth of the pit and immediately a great cloud of dense smoke issues forth, blackening the atmosphere and obscuring the sun (cf. Joel ii: 30f). A great swarm of locusts issues from the cloud (cf. Ex. x: 13f, Joel i: 4ff) but they differ from the ordinary locusts in that authority was given them (*ἐδόθη αὐταῖς ἐξουσία*) not to injure vegetation but the people who have not the seal of God on their foreheads (vii: 1ff). They thus became like a tribe of scorpions whose poisonous thrust is often referred to in the Bible (1 Kings xii: 11, Ezek. ii: 6, Luke xi: 12, etc.). These locusts must not kill but only afflict for five months those whom they attack. These locust-scorpions and the effects of their attack are described more in detail in vs. 6-11. They are very extraordinary, appearing as horses made ready for battle but as having gold-crowned heads, women's hair, men's faces, lion's teeth, iron breastplates, scorpion's tails, and wings that make a sound like that of many chariots drawn by horses rushing to battle, and they are marshalled under a king who is called in Hebrew Abaddon and in Greek Apollyon. The pain they inflict is so terrible that their victims desire to die but cannot. The fact that they are to afflict men for five months appears to point to the partial and incomplete nature of the visitation. The scorpion is a small animal resembling a lobster in shape but having a long tail at the end of which there is a venomous sting. It seizes its prey with its claws and kills it with its sting. Scorpions swarm under stones and in chinks of walls and often hide under beds and mats in houses. Their sting is very painful but seldom causes death. At least a dozen varieties are found in Palestine and Syria, the largest being about 6 inches long, and black.

XVIII

The Sixth Trumpet or Second Woe. "And the sixth . . . thefts." Vs. 13-21.

When the sixth trumpet sounds a solitary voice is heard in reply. It seems to come from the four corners of the golden altar (viii: 3) and may be that of the angel who held the golden censer as he stood at it, or an answer to the prayers of the saints (viii: 3); in either case the result is the same. The voice orders the loosing of the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates. This river was the eastern limit of the territory promised to Abraham (Gen. xv: 18) beyond which lay the great powers of the east, Babylonia and Assyria by whom the Israelites were reduced to captivity. The idea seems to be that the heathen eastern powers are God's instruments of vengeance. The Euphrates is again mentioned in connection with the Sixth Bowl (xvi: 12). The four angels who had been made ready for their work are now set free and at once enter on their mission of death, which again is partial, only one-third of the people being marked for slaughter. The destruction however is wrought, not by the angels themselves but by a vast army of two hundred million horsemen which he sees in the vision and the number of which he hears. Perhaps the idea is based on Ps. lxviii: 17. The riders wore breastplates of fire, jacinth, and brimstone, which probably we should understand as indicating the color of the breastplates, namely yellow and blue, from the color of the sulphurous flames that proceed from the horses' mouths. The description suggests the overthrow of the cities of the plain (Gen. xix: 24ff). The horses have heads like lions, and from their mouths fire, smoke, and brimstone proceed, and are the immediate instruments of destruction; but they inflict much injury also by their tails which are like serpents with heads. It might have been expected that the other two-thirds who were not killed would have taken warning at the fate of their fellows and repented of their heathen worship and shameful vices which were intimately associated with the rites of heathen worship, (cf. Mark vii: 21, Gal. v: 19, 20, Rev. xxi: 8, xxii: 15). But this they do not do.

XIX

The Strong Angel and the Little Book. Chapter x: 1-11.

1. As in the case of the seals, the series of trumpets is interrupted at the end of the sixth, while attention is directed to the Church in the section x: 1—xi: 13.

2. Still another angel now appears. He is enrobed in a cloud, the vehicle whereby heavenly creatures ascend and descend (cf. Ps. civ: 3, Dan. vii: 13, Acts i: 9 ff, 1 Thess iv: 17, etc.). He has the rainbow (ἶρις) on his head. His face and feet resemble those of the glorified Christ but he is not to be identified with Him. He holds in his hand a little book already opened,—not sealed as was the one in v: 1. John probably has Ezek. ii: 1—iii: 11 in mind throughout this whole section. The posture of the angel is such as to show his great size and is entirely in harmony with John's idea of his strength, as is also his powerful voice. As he speaks the seven thunders reply. The article here would indicate that these seven thunders formed a well known group, but what it was we have no means of judging. John seems to be taking notes of what he sees and hears, but though he evidently understands the words of the seven thunders he is forbidden to write them down; why, or what they were we do not know (cf. 2 Cor. xii: 4). This is the one instance in which he is forbidden to write and communicate to the churches what he has seen and heard (i: 11, 19). This remarkable angel swears by the Eternal Creator that there shall be no more delay but that with the sounding of the seventh trumpet the mystery of God shall be clear. Then John hears once more the voice that ordered him not to write what the seven thunders uttered (vs. 4) commanding him to take the book that lay open in the angel's hand. In his ecstasy John now leaves the door (iv: 1) and approaches the great angel, asking at the same time for the book. He is told to take it and eat it up which he does, finding it, as the angel had informed him, sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach. Then he is told that he must prophesy again before peoples, races, tongues, and kings.

3. What is the meaning and significance of this section?

A. The strong angel of vs. 1. He bears striking resemblance to the glorified Christ of chapter i: 13ff, the sun-like face and his feet, but the differences are so obvious that we cannot identify them as the same. He comes down from heaven. He stands with one foot on the sea and the other on the land, showing that his authority and power extend to all the earth, or probably we should say, to all the empire. His words in vs. 6 and 7 show that he has inner knowledge of the plans and purposes of God. These considerations lead us to conclude that the strong angel of this chapter is a special representative of God; or to strip it of its apocalyptic form, God manifesting Himself anew.

B. The little book open in his hand. The analogy of Ezek. ii: 1ff on which this passage is so manifestly based and of the Book of Destiny, v: 1ff, as well as the nature of the book itself, —something that could be eaten up,—all tend to indicate that the little book signifies a fragment of God's purpose now revealed.

C. John, the seer is of course one of the creatures of earth, one who is favored with an apocalyptic revelation from heaven. He therefore represents the Church—God's people in the world, to whom the revelation of God's purpose is given. John's ready acceptance of the little book indicates the readiness with which His people receive the revelation of His purpose, while his eating it up indicates the completeness to which this reception is carried; the sweetness from it in his mouth shows how very pleasant they found it to be, while its bitterness afterwards indicates its after effects, summoning its recipients to give up much that they had held dear, calling on them to discharge their difficult duties in the world, and revealing to them something of the divine purpose which so far they had not understood.

4. The significance of this section is clear from vs. 6 and 7, "And sware . . . to his servants the prophets." And vs. 11, "You must prophesy again, etc."

A. John stood here in the rank of a prophet (cf. i: 1 and xxii: 9) and as a prophet he receives this revelation. A comparison of these words "To his servants the prophets," with Amos iii: 7, Jer. vii: 25 and xxv: 4 and especially with Rev. i: 1, 3 and xi: 18 leaves no doubt regarding John's position as a servant and prophet of God and a representative of the whole body of Christians. Besides, a comparison of this passage with

these and also with Rev. vi: 10, 11, plainly indicates that the mystery of God was the reason why, in the providence of God, they were subjected to persecutions and hardships and not earlier avenged.

B. The burden of the revelation is that the time is at hand in the great display which is passing before him, when the mystery of God should be explained. And as the purpose of the vision was to reveal the forces at work in the present and their issue (i: 1, iv: 1), and as the sixth trumpet has sounded and the explanation is to come when the seventh begins to sound, of course that will not be long (xi: 14). Thus the purpose of this chapter is to assure Christ's faithful people who receive His truth and serve Him that light is to be at once thrown on their circumstances. The relation of the chapter to its context will be considered more fully after the next section, xi: 1-13.

XX

The Two Witnesses. Chapter xi: 1-13.

Here a number of points call for our consideration.

1. Measuring of the temple of God. Vs. 1-2.

A. A temple has already been mentioned in iii: 12 and vii: 15 and an altar in vi: 9, viii: 3 and ix: 13; but we are not told that they are the same as those mentioned here. The temple of the tent of the testimony is not opened until we reach xv: 5 and besides there is nothing to indicate that the temple here is seen in the vision, but verse 2 would rather indicate that it is on the earth as the description appears to fit the temple at Jerusalem which was "the temple of God," had an outer court given to the Gentiles, an altar, and worshippers, and is in "the holy city." The temple is measured manifestly for its preservation. The "holy city" is to be trodden down by the Gentiles and the outer court is given them.

B. The forty and two months is the same as the 1260 days or 3½ years (42x30 = 1260). This is an indefinite and broken period of considerable length indicating the time of superiority of the heathen forces, which are here, the pagan people of the Empire. The idea is based on Daniel vii: 25 and xii: 7 and may have been the time of the sufferings of the Jews under Antiochus whether we reckon from June 168 to Dec. 165 B. C. or from Dec. 168 to June 164 B. C. In Rev. xii: 6, 14 and xiii: 5 we have the same period mentioned in similar ways.

C. The temple with its altar and people we may conclude, stands for the Church. The reasons for this will be clearer after the various points in the remainder of the chapter have been elucidated.

2. The two witnesses. Vs. 3ff.

A. The two witnesses are "mine," i. e. they belong to the speaker who is not indicated but appears to be the same one who gave the seer the reed (vs. 1) and is therefore one who represents God. The length of time they prophesy is the same as that during which the holy city is to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles. As sackcloth is suggestive of grief and sorrow their clothing as they prophesy suggests that they are in trouble. But power to prophesy is promised them.

B. Who these two witnesses are it is difficult to determine. No doubt the seer has in mind Zech. iv but this passage does not explain the meaning of our text. These two witnesses cannot be any pair of worthies of the past, as the promise is for the future and they are to prophesy in the flesh through the period of Gentile domination indicated as 1260 days. This excludes Moses and Elijah, Elijah and Elisha, Enoch and Elijah, though vs. 5 shows that Elijah, and vs. 6 that Moses are in John's mind. The words that follow also appear to exclude such allegorical interpretations as the Law and the Prophets, the Law and the Gospel, the Old Testament and the New. The best interpretation on the whole seems to be that the witnesses represent the Church in her function as a witness-bearer for Christ. This is confirmed by the words in vs. 7 that the beast shall make war with the witnesses, as war is said to be made against one or two persons only if they stand in a representative or corporate capacity, e. g. kings. She is pictured by two witnesses, partly because of the suggestion of various Old Testament passages (Deut. xix: 15, Zech. iv: 2ff), but chiefly no doubt to symbolize her two elements, first Jewish, and second Gentile. The Church in her two-fold aspect of Jewish and Gentile, would bear witness through the whole time of Gentile domination but in sorrow and self-humiliation (i. e. clothed in sackcloth) because of the trials and hardships she would have to meet in such circumstances. These might be described as olive trees and lamps, especially as the seven churches have been called lamps (λυχνίαι—ch. i: 12, 20); their witness would be as a fire consuming their enemies to whom they would appear to be as a scourge on the earth, and over whom they would have great power even as Moses and Elijah had great powers entrusted to them (vs. 5 and 6). The Church's enemies, however, would apparently overcome her and rejoice in her downfall, but her defeat and death would be only apparent as she would come to life again and ascend to heaven in full view of her enemies to their astonishment.

C. It is from God that the two witnesses receive their power. "I will give to my two witnesses." This will enable them to prophesy.

D. In the powers ascribed to the witnesses there is as usual considerable modification of the details of the narratives that John evidently has in mind (cf. 2 Kings i: 10ff, Luke ix: 54,

also 1 Kings xvii: 1 and Ex. vii: 19f). Whereas in the case of Elijah the fire came down from heaven here it proceeds from the mouth of the witnesses. The power of the witnesses to smite the earth with every plague as often as they wish, is much greater than that given to Moses.

E. The immunity from danger which the witnesses enjoy lasts only until their work is done as then the wild beast from the abyss destroys them.

3. The beast that arose from the abyss. This is the first time in the book such a beast (*θηρίον* a wild beast) has been mentioned, nor is there any further reference to such an one until we reach chapter xiii: 1. Yet the definite article implies that the figure is already familiar to the reader. This wild beast from the abyss is clearly a power of considerable importance as otherwise a beast would not be spoken of as making war, except perhaps in a figurative sense. If the two witnesses are the Church in its Jewish and Gentile aspects, the wild beast is most reasonably interpreted as the Imperial power that is represented as attacking, overcoming, and destroying Christ's witnesses, the Church. The picture may have been suggested by Dan. vii: 3ff but the sea is exchanged for the abyss. John perceives that there will be a great struggle between the Imperial power and the Church which will result in the apparent defeat of the Church, so complete that even decent burial will be denied her, but ultimately she will attain real victory.

4. The great city vs. 8. Though the expression "great city" is used of Babylon (Rome) in xvi: 19, xvii: 18 and xviii: 10ff the words "where also their Lord was crucified," leave no doubt that Jerusalem is here meant. But why should it be called "Sodom and Egypt?" We may remember that the prophets sometimes connected the name of Sodom with Judah (Isa. i: 9, Ezek. xvi: 46, 55f). It would signify and suggest moral degradation. Egypt "the house of bondage" (Ex. xx: 2) is plainly a symbol of oppression though nowhere else in the Old Testament or the New applied to Jerusalem or Israel. We must remember, too, that it is only from a spiritual point of view (*πνευματικῶς*) that this city is called "Sodom and Egypt." In vs. 2 it is spoken of as "the holy city" but from another point of view. To the devout Jew, Jerusalem was the holy city, par excellence, because the centre of the religious life of Israel; to the Christian it was the holy city also because the centre of

Judaism and so intimately associated with Christianity and Christ. Yet it could be considered from another point of view as a city of wickedness and oppression, because of the extent to which it had become Gentile and filled with Gentile wickedness to which it is given up and from which only the sanctuary is preserved, and it is the "holy city" only because of its religious associations to Jew and Christian. In the ultimate meaning it therefore becomes a symbol of Rome the spiritual Sodom and Egypt where Christ was again crucified in His saints.

5. All kindreds, tongues, races, and peoples, (vs. 9) as also those who dwell on the earth (vs. 10), are of course the heathen people of the Empire which was then so universal in its scope. They gaze at the sight which lasts as many days as the witnesses had testified in years, and their delight at their victory over the witnesses is great. Like fiends they will neither bury their bodies nor permit others to do so, while childishly they celebrate their victory by giving one another gifts. While their victory is of short duration it is long enough to have the appearance of permanence. The witnesses had tortured the world by their messages of conviction and the jubilation is more because of the relief from this torment than because of the death of the witnesses.

6. To the astonishment and dismay of the onlookers the bodies suddenly come to life as the spirit of life from God enters them and they ascend to heaven, in response to a call to do so. This of course means that the Church, when apparently vanquished by her enemies and dead is suddenly raised to new life by divine power.

7. The earthquake and its accompaniments vs. 13. These details are added, like so many others in this book, chiefly to give color to the picture, and the numbers are conventional. Earthquakes were very familiar in Asia Minor in the first century and the destruction wrought by them was often much more severe than that indicated here. The fear that falls upon the rest of the people and the glory which they give to the God of heaven are also conventional. While quite genuine as far as they go they are very superficial and soon pass away as they do not come from any real change of heart.

8. The significance of the passage is plain. The Church, as the witness-bearer of God causes much trouble among the non-

Christian peoples by her testimony and arouses their active opposition, with the result that the Church is apparently exterminated but really is not so but rises triumphant from the experience to the amazement of her enemies. The relation of this passage to the larger context will be considered in connection with the next section.

9. The bearing of this chapter on the date of the book has received much attention. Dr. Johannes Weiss (die Offenbarung des Johannes page 130) is of the opinion that this chapter can be dated with certainty between May and August of A. D. 70 and that a later date is impossible. But A. even if this be the case it does not fix the date of the completion of the book as a whole, and B. Jerusalem has suffered many calamities from the Gentiles due more or less directly to religious activity on the part of the Jews. C. The picture is not sufficiently definite to enable us to identify it with any particular catastrophe to Jerusalem, much less that of A. D. 70, and D. if the passage does refer to that event it is more likely to be as a past event than as a future probability. We must conclude then that in our present state of knowledge the passage throws little or no light on the date of the book.

XXI

The Seventh Trumpet. Chapter xi: 14-19.

1. Connective. vs. 14. These two short sentences serve to mark clearly the dividing line between the second and third woe, the sixth and seventh trumpet.

2. The seventh trumpet sounds (vs. 15), and as in the case of the other trumpets action at once begins.

A. There are great voices in the heavens (vs. 15). What these are we are not told but possibly they are voices of the four living creatures (iv: 6) as they represent the realm of nature, or perhaps they are the voices of some angels specially appointed to make the announcement, especially as the twenty-four elders utter their thanksgiving in vs. 17 and 18.

B. The announcement is that the kingdoms of the world have passed under the dominion of the Lord and His Christ. The Lord is of course God, and His Christ is Jesus Christ. The reign is one as the verb ("shall reign," *βασιλεύσει*) is singular; and it is perennial and endless.

3. The four and twenty elders add their thanksgiving (vs. 16-18). These, as we saw, (chapter iv: 4ff) represent the Church, and prostrate themselves as they add their worship (cf. iv: 10, v: 8, 14, xix: 4).

B. Their words add considerable to the announcement of vs. 15. Not only has the Lord God, almighty and eternal, assumed the sovereignty of the world but the hour of His wrath and judgment has arrived. In this judgment Ps. 2 is prominently in the mind of the writer. The judgment is to include all classes, living and dead, saints and sinners. While the living are not specially mentioned they are included in the present participles (fear *φοβουμένοις*; destroy *διαφθείροντας*). By "the dead" are doubtless meant especially those who have died in the persecutions that called forth the Apocalypse, while "the prophets," "saints" and "those who fear thy name, the small and the great," are the Christians of all classes; "those who destroy the earth," are the Church's opponents, the supporters of paganism and the Imperial religion; all who helped to poison society were to be destroyed.

4. The temple opened in heaven. vs. 19. This is not the temple of chapter xi: 1-2 which is on the earth. A heavenly temple is mentioned in iii: 12, vii: 15, xv: 5ff, xxi: 22. The view of the temple opened in heaven appears to be but momentary, as it is opened again in xv: 5ff. But while it is open the seer beholds the Ark of the Covenant in it and thus looks upon a further pledge that the declaration will be fulfilled.

5. The lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquake, and the great hail again add color to the picture and greatly increase the majesty and excellence of the scene.

6. The meaning of the section is plain. Manifestly we must read it in the light of chapter vi: 10, 11 and x: 6, 7. This would indicate that the mystery of God was the burning question of how long the sufferings and persecutions of the Church must continue. The mystery is now finished (or ended, or explained) by this declaration that God is now to be supreme and the time of judgment has come. This is as yet a declaration in heaven and there is no indication that it is announced in the world to the Church. Although announced it is not to be gained without the strong opposition of pagan forces. This conflict and the result of it is pictured in the following chapters.

XXII

General Significance of the Section. Chapter viii: 1—xi: 19.

In the opening of the sealed book (chapter vi and vii) we have seen a picture of the Empire as it appeared to the seer. There were great calamities both present and impending, the Church was suffering from a severe persecution and anxiously asking how much longer it must suffer; the Empire too, was suffering from many forms of evil and more were soon to come, so much so that the day of the outpouring of the Divine wrath in judgment was evidently at hand (vi: 17). But before it comes special provision is made for the Church (chapter vii).

In chapter viii: 2—xi: 19 we have the first stage in that judgment, a stage and section of the book that may be called "The Seven Trumpets." In the first two chapters of this section we have pictures of a series of calamities gradually increasing in severity until in the sixth a third part of the men are killed, but so far as we are told no one of those sealed in chapter vii is injured. They are specially exempted from the calamity of the fifth trumpet (ix: 4) and in the sixth they are apparently not injured either. As in the case of the seal-openings we doubtless have here representations of events that were actually taking place in the Empire and probably the same or similar events. But while the seal-openings merely exhibit these events and reveal a situation, the trumpet blasts show that these events had a special significance and were intended to fulfil a particular purpose. We have an indication of this significance in chapter ix: 20, 21. This is that the judgments of the trumpet blasts are of the nature of an appeal to repentance. This is confirmed by their similarity to the plagues of Moses and Pharaoh in Egypt and by their place in relationship to the other parts of the book. Judgment is announced as imminent in the seals (vi: 17). It is partial and apparently remedial in its intention in the trumpets (ix: 20, 21) and not complete until we reach chapters xvii and xviii which are preceded by a description of a terrible conflict in which the powers of evil are overthrown. All these things indicate that the calamities of the trumpets are a warning and an appeal to the people who were not Christians. They were a revelation of what God was in power and holiness, that He was Lord of the realms of

nature and men, and that they were opposed to Him in their pursuit of vice and in their worship of idols and demons. The terrible evils following the trumpet-blasts were a warning of what would follow if they persisted in their present attitude. And because a revelation and a warning they were also an appeal—an appeal to depart from that position of danger and rebellion against God, and to take up a new attitude of obedience to Him and devotion to His cause. All this they might have learned much easier and more comfortably by hearing and responding to the preaching of the gospel in their midst but they would not. They were so entirely and completely attached to their own ways that not only did they refuse to hear, but they did their utmost to destroy those who preached and those who heard it. If they were ignorant it was a blame-worthy ignorance and they were quite as guilty. Still the divine goodness goes out to them, and by the stern process of pain will bring them to a sense of their position when they would not respond to the gentler method of the gospel message.

The beneficient appeal of affliction as it comes in the calamities of the trumpet blasts is in vain. They do not repent. This leaves only one course open, their overthrow and destruction. The first stage in this is indicated in the declaration of the divine action following the seventh trumpet (xi: 15). His dominion over the earthly kingdoms is declared. This will be opposed to the bitter end by the powers of evil and a terrible conflict will result.

But what of the Christians in view of this approaching conflict? In chapters x:1—xi: 13 the provision made for them is described in three ways. A. The scene of chapter x shows that the purpose of God is to be revealed to them without delay (vs. 7). This revelation will be very acceptable to them but will also bring its sorrows as they must continue their witness. B. The measuring of the temple in xi: 1-2 shows that they are to be preserved from the general coming destruction about them. C. Chapter xi: 1-13 shows that in continuing to bear witness for Christ they will stir up much suffering by awaking conscience in their enemies, that in their anger and resentment they will try to destroy the Christians and will seem to succeed, but that they will come off more than conquerors in it all, rising triumphant and glorious to the amazement of their enemies by the blessing of God.

XXIII

The Woman and the Dragon. Chapter xii: 1-17.

1. Most commentators and students of the Apocalypse find a great break in the book at the end of chapter xi. Indeed some appear to consider it the most important dividing line in the book. No doubt there is a great change as we pass from chapter xi to chapter xii but the division is not as well-marked as some would have us believe. Our study of the unity of the book (Introduction, VII) has shown that the great break in it is at the end of chapter iii where we have the dividing line between the two visions.

2. A great sign appears in heaven. Vs. 1 and 2. The heavenly scene begun in chapter iv: 1 continues but new features come into view. This is the first appearance of a female figure in the Apocalypse. The sun forms her raiment (cf. Ps. civ: 2) the moon her footstool, (cf. Ps. cx: 1 and Mark xii: 36, Ps. viii: 6, Heb. ii: 8) while she wears on her head a wreath of twelve stars, cf. Gen. xxxvii: 9). She is with child and so near the time of her delivery that the birth pangs are already upon her, which the writer sharply contrasts with the magnificence of her clothing and adornment. Probably he has Isa. vii: 14 (cf. Matt. i: 23 and Luke i: 31) in mind.

The most reasonable interpretation of this is that the woman represents the Jewish Church. She was glorious in the sight of God, so glorious that it might be said that she alone He knew (Amos iii: 2). The Jewish Church however finds her completion and herself matured in the Christian Church. Therefore we should not distinguish too closely between them as they are not sharply separated in this book. This is particularly the case here as the words of vs. 13 show. The birth-pangs would be the spiritual struggles through which the Jewish Church passed at the time when Christ was born.

3. Vs. 3-4. Another great sign appears, a blood-red dragon with seven diademed heads and ten horns; his size and strength are indicated by his tail catching the third part of the stars and dragging them to the earth. He stands in front of the woman waiting to devour her child as soon as born.

In our endeavor to understand the meaning of this sign we

must note that the dragon can fight both in heaven and in earth (vs. 7 and 17), has angels (vs. 7), and is particularly designated as an "old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (vs. 9), and again as a serpent (vs. 14 and 15). He makes and carries on war (vs. 7, 17), gives his seat, power, and authority to a beast (ch. xiii: 2), and is worshipped (chapter xiii: 4). In view of these considerations the most likely interpretation of the meaning of this "sign" is that the dragon is the supreme power of evil,—the devil and Satan who acts through the force of the Empire, his heads and his horns are the Imperial instruments by whom he carries on his war and persecution (Ramsay, Letters, page 94). The Empire of course had worked hardship on the Jewish people in many ways and in the person of Herod was anxiously seeking to destroy Christ.

4. Vs. 5 and 6. The child is born but Satan is foiled in his desire to devour it. Evidently the writer has in mind here Ps. ii: 9; but in ii: 27 and xix: 15 the words plainly refer to Christ. This helps us to fix the interpretation of the Child as Jesus, the Christ, and this view is confirmed by the further statement that "her child was caught up to God and to his throne," which surely is a fair picture of Christ's resurrection and ascension. Though the dragon's antipathy is more against the Child than the woman, yet she flees from his presence on the ascension of her Child to God. The author may have in mind the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness (Deut. viii: 2ff), or Elijah's two withdrawals from Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings xvii: 2ff and xix: 3f), or the flight of many Jews in the time of Antiochus (1 Macc. ii: 29f), or the flight of Joseph and Mary with the young Child into Egypt (Matt. ii: 13). The description is doubtless intended to indicate that in the good providence of God the Church was provided for and kept so that none of the attacks of her enemies were successful in securing her destruction. Her support would come through fellowship with the Father and Son by the Spirit. The length of time which the woman remains hiding in the wilderness is given as 1260 days or 3½ years, which is the same as that of the prophesy of the two witnesses (xi: 3). Indeed the two are representations of the Church in different aspects; the two witnesses as testifying for Christ in the world, the woman as the body of people through whom Christ came and whom Satan

assails.

5. The conflict in heaven, vs. 7-12. The scene changes. While the whole picture is in heaven (vs. 1) there is now the representation of that which takes place in heaven as distinct from the earth (vs. 9). Michael and his angels on the one hand fight with the dragon and his angels on the other. The result of this conflict is that the dragon is beaten and besides expelled from heaven and with all his angels cast into the earth. (The seer may have in mind Luke x: 18 and John xii: 31). His overthrow is proclaimed in heaven by a great voice which announces the victory, the means by which it was gained, and its results (vs. 10-12). The source of the great voice is not mentioned but the expression "our brethren" (vs. 10) would suggest that it may have come from one of the elders. The proclamation shows that the victory over the dragon and his angels was complete; not only was he beaten but he was cast out of heaven and his angels also. If this clears the way for the free reign of Christ in heaven it brings dismay to the earth. The victory was gained because of the blood of the Lamb and the word of their witness, showing that the conflict was spiritual rather than literal, which, doubtless, is in part the real significance of its being represented as in heaven. The phrase further indicates that the conflict was one between the spiritual forces of good and evil, not only as these found expression in the body of Christians and their persecutors, but between these forces in themselves. The results of the victory are startling. On the one hand it gives Christ free reign in heaven, i. e. mastery over all the spiritual forces, while on the other it brings terror to the inhabitants of the earth and sea, that is citizens of the Empire, because Satan, beaten in heaven and cast into the earth, is filled with wrath and determined to use what time and opportunity remains to him to the utmost as he knows that it will not be for long.

6. The persecution on earth, vs. 13-18. Cast into the earth the dragon pursues the woman. In view of what has been said this must mean that the seer considers the Empire as under the sway of Satan in its persecution of the Church. But provision is made for her and she is enabled to endure the storm of persecution which continues to rage. Vs. 14-16 explain verse 6 while vs. 13 and 17 further explain the latter part of vs. 4. Indeed vs. 7-17 may be regarded as explanatory of vs. 1-6. Un-

able either to destroy the Christ or the Church he will attack Christians who are designated as those who A. keep the commandments of God, and B. have the witness of Jesus. But as he is bent on this mission he suddenly pauses on the sand of the sea, as the great beast of chapter xiii: 1-10 breaks upon John's sight.

7. Here then we have another picture of that terrible conflict of the early Church. Behind it all is Satan, the arch-enemy of man and God, working through the Empire and attemping to destroy first the Christ, and then the Church, and at war even with the angel hosts in heaven, but unable to accomplish his purpose because of the Divine care of the Church; and entirely beaten in his conflict and cast into the earth he attacks with renewed energy the remnant of the Church.

8. What encouragement such a picture must have brought to the little band of Christ's people in those terrible days. The assurance that Satan was doing his worst but unable to prevail against God, that although the conflict was fierce and terrible God Himself was caring for them, and that nothing, not even the fiercest attacks of the enemy, could shake His dominion or overthrow His power.

XXIV

The Great Beast from the Sea. Chapter xiii: 1-10.

Another great beast having seven heads and ten horns appears rising up from the sea. His horns are crowned and he wears the names of blasphemy. He appears like a leopard, has feet as a bear, mouth like a lion, and the power, seat, and great authority of the dragon. He receives a deadly wound in one of his heads, but the wound heals. He is the object of the world's wonder, and with the dragon the world's worship. His mouth speaks great blasphemies. Great power is his, but his end is sure.

When we consider the picture here given there can be little doubt as to its significance. Doubtless the writer has in mind the well-known pictures of the Book of Daniel,—chapter vii: 2ff. But all the beasts there needed to be combined to form a symbol sufficiently brutish and terrible for the writer's purpose. If the dragon of chapter xii was Satan expressing himself in the Imperial power, this is the Imperial power as the expression and instrument of Satan. The sea, on which John would often look, presented a fit picture of that great agitated mass of unregenerated humanity out of which national and social movements come. The monster rising out of the sea would be a monster essentially foreign to western Asia. The many heads and horns, as in the case of the dragon, add to the ugliness of the picture, and if they represent anything it is the crowned emperors and temples dedicated to the worship of human beings, blasphemously called Gods. Rome was like a beast of supreme power and ugliness in the eyes of the Christians. Its power was chiefly brute force and its character and power might be fairly pictured in this way as they were formed by the gradual and continuous addition of many peoples of varied race, language, and religion, many of whom were never thoroughly assimilated but added merely as additional excrescences; it was like a leopard, agile, crafty, cruel; its strength and power to crush could be fittingly shown in the feet of the bear; while the roar of the lion would aptly express its declarations, blasphemous and haughty. If it is difficult for us to combine

all these elements in a picture, it is not difficult to see that the combination would be a fitting symbol of the Imperial power. Nor would it be too much to assert that to an earnest Christian it would appear to occupy the very throne of Satan and possess his power. We must remember too, that the emperors claimed to be divine and were universally worshipped. Surely it is not too much to say that all such claims were blasphemies. When we further recall the practically universal power and dominion of Rome in those days and how all were required to observe the Imperial religion, we have no difficulty in understanding the words of vs. 7 and 8. The forty-two months is the period of Roman supremacy equal to the time times and a half of chapter xii: 14 and the 1260 days of xi: 3. The words of vs. 3 that one of the heads of the beast was wounded to death, and the deadly wound was healed fittingly express the well known story of Nero redivivus (see Introduction IV).

But there is something certain to which the reader must specially give attention. The one who is destined for captivity goes into captivity, the one who kills with the sword must be killed by the same. Rome is destined for captivity and into it she shall go; she has killed with the sword and must herself be killed in the same way. This is the fate that is before her. Here is encouragement for the overburdened and persecuted Christians. Let them bear patiently their hard lot for the time will come when their persecutor will be no more.

XXV

The Beast from the Land. Xiii: 11-18.

The seer observes a second beast rising from the land, which would seem to indicate that he was a native of the country,—an expression of the life of the people of Asia. This beast is more natural than the first, but equally emphatic in his words. He has the authority of the first beast, i. e. of the Imperial power, and his business is to promote its worship. He performs great signs such as making fire descend from heaven, and thereby deceiving the people, as he commands them to make images to the Imperial power and to these he pretends to give life, so that they speak and order the death of any who refuse to worship them. Also this beast requires all the people to receive a mark in their right hand or forehead, forbidding to others the right to buy or sell.

What can this represent? Verse 18 gives an interpretation to which attention is specially called by the words "Here is wisdom." But the interpretation here given only adds to the difficulty. When all is considered no explanation appears to the writer to be as good as that of Prof. Ramsay (Letters, p. 97ff) which in brief is as follows. This beast symbolizes the province of Asia, the two horns representing it in its double aspect of civil and religious administration,—the Proconsul and the Commune. The country was peaceful and no army was needed, so the beast is like a lamb; but it spake as a dragon for Rome always expressed herself sternly and haughtily. The provincial administration exercised full Imperial authority which was delegated to the Proconsul for his year of office so that this beast exercised all the authority of the first beast in his sight. The provincial administration organized the state religion of the emperors and thus made the land, (or country, γῆ, not earth), to worship the first beast. This organization and administration included the arranging of the ritual as well as superintending and directing its performance, ordering the erection of temples and statues, fixing holidays and festivals, etc., etc., by way of carrying out the Imperial regulation that all loyal subjects must conform to the state religion and take part in the Imperial ritual,—and

thus saying to them that dwell in the land that they should make an image to the beast. Any who would not perform an act of worship to the Emperor as represented by his statue were put to death, (as Pliny indicates in his letter to Trajan). And as the other statements in vs. 13-16 are neither corroborated nor contradicted by other evidence, and as they are quite in accord with what we might expect in the case we must believe that we have here a reliable contemporary account of the persecution, though in accordance with the nature of the book we may well believe that to a considerable degree it is figurative or symbolic.

While there is some difference of opinion among the best recent interpreters as to the significance of some of the details of this section, and while some slight difference of opinion exists as to the general meaning of the section,—Swete, for instance, thinking that "the second beast represents the sorcery and superstition of the age as engaged in a common attempt to impose the Caesar cult upon the provinces, behind which there lay the Satanic purpose of bringing ruin upon the rising Christian brotherhoods," and C. Anderson Scott thinking "that the second monster stands for the priests of the Imperial cult, attached to the Imperial temples,"—it is reasonably clear that the second beast is designated to represent the provincial means of enforcing the claims of the Imperial government.

Many attempts have been made to explain vs. 18 but none have been generally accepted. Perhaps the most widely accepted is that the number 666 represents the total numerical value of the words Nero Caesar written in Hebrew נרון קסר (i. e. reading from right to left 50 + 200 + 6 + 50 + 100 + 60 + 200 = 666), but in this there are several difficulties and it is by no means a satisfactory explanation. While we may be sure that the interpretation would be perfectly clear to the minds of the Asian Christians we have to admit that the key to it was soon after lost and has never been found.

XXVI

The Lamb on Mount Zion. Chapter xiv: 1-5.

1. It has been pointed out (Rev. J. T. Deane, M. A., Visions and Revelations, p. 156f), that there is a striking contrast and resemblance between this section and chapter xiii. He mentions the following, xiii: 1 "I saw a beast coming up out of the sea." xiv: 1 "I saw, ... the Lamb standing on the mount Zion." The followers of the beast had his name written on their right hands and their foreheads; the 144,000 have their Father's name written on their foreheads. The worshippers of the beast say, "Who is like the beast! who can war with him." The singers sing a new song before the throne.

2. The Lamb on Mount Zion. We have only to refer to the other passages in this book where the Lamb is mentioned and compare them with this to conclude that none but Christ is here signified by the term. The Lamb is represented as standing on Mount Zion, the site of the Temple. This mountain seems to have become a symbol of the security and strength which belong to the people of God. (Cf. Ps. ii: 6, xlviii: 1ff, lxxviii: 54, 68, lxxxvii: 1ff, cxxv: 1, Isa. xxviii: 16, lix: 20, Mic. iv: 7, Obad. 17, 21). Thus the picture here is one of security, strength and consequently peace in the fellowship of Christ.

3. The company is one of 144,000. It is not exactly the same as the twelve times twelve thousand of chapter vii: 4 as the tribes are not in view. But the sum total is the same and the descriptions are sufficiently alike to permit us to believe that the same body of people is meant. In chapter vii they are sealed, (which exempts them from spiritual harm), while here they have the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father in their foreheads. As Dr. Swete also points out, this suggests the two fold aspect of a nature owned of God and a life consecrated to His service. The parallel with the multitudes of chapter vii as well as the description of them following, marks them as again a representation of the Church whether it was made up of Jewish or Gentile elements. They alone can learn the song; they are virgins,—by which we must understand, not that they

lived ascetic or celibate lives but that they were not contaminated with the pagan worship of the times as it was enforced by the local forces; they are redeemed from the earth, follow the Lamb wherever He goes, and are a first-fruit of redemption to Him and to God, while they are guileless and faultless before His throne. All this could designate only the body of the faithful to Christ of the day.

4. The voice and the song, vs. 2-3. The source of these is not mentioned, but it is apparently not the 144,000. The words by which the voice and song are described are so similar to those that have occurred before as to call for no special comment (see chapter i: 15, v: 8, 9).

5. In chapters xii-xiv there are many indications of the security of the Christians amid the attacks of Satan, the Empire, and the pagan religious forces. The security, of course, is essentially spiritual. But to make assurance and encouragement doubly sure, and to add confidence to hope, our attention here is especially directed to the body of Christians. It is done in a way that must have been most cheering to the suffering followers of Christ as they perused the words. It is a repetition of the author's method in chapters vii and xi: 1-12.

XXVII

Heavenly Appearances and Announcements. Chapter xiv: 6-20.

1. Before the final decisive conflict takes place there are a number of angelic appearances each conveying an intimation of coming events. If we include the voice of vs. 13 and assume that it is that of an angel we find that the announcements are sevenfold and all made by angels. These angels must be clearly distinguished from those of chapter xv: 1ff and from the angels of the seven trumpets, chapter viii: 1—xi: 19.

2. Vs. 6-7. The first of these announcements is that of an angel who flies in mid-heaven where he may be plainly seen and heard. His message is the everlasting gospel and it is to be proclaimed to all the various peoples that make up the Empire. The gospel is eternal (*αἰώνιον*, age-long) and is thus in direct opposition to the promise of temporary indulgence given by the Imperial powers. It is proclaimed with a voice as strong as any that the forces of evil can use, while it comes from a loftier source.

The message itself has a number of elements. It calls on all A. to fear God, and B. to give glory to Him rather than to the Imperial power. C. It announces that the time of His judgment is come, and gives this as the reason why He should be feared and glorified. The Imperial powers were compelling people to fear and glorify the Emperor as a god. D. They are to worship Him who is the Creator, while the Imperial forces required the worship of the Imperial power (xiii: 12). While this angel has the everlasting gospel to preach, this message is not a proclamation of it. The fact that the angel has the gospel to proclaim shows that repentance is still possible and this is supported by the call to fear, glorify, and worship God. It is a last opportunity offered before the storm of judgment breaks, but few if any respond to it (xvi: 9, 11) even though the first four angels have poured out their bowls. This angel's message is also an intimation that the divine judgment is at hand and therefore God ought to be feared and glorified as a matter of prudence to escape the outpouring of His wrath, as well as be-

cause He is the Creator, and thus superior to the beast as an object of worship. This proclamation would then be a source of much joy to the suffering Christians as in the announcement that the time of judgment is come they would understand that the hour of their deliverance had arrived. Its salient nature, however, is that of a warning and an appeal.

3. The second angel, vs. 8, follows the first in his flight in the midst of heaven, while his message tells of the fall of Babylon and the reason for it. Probably here the writer has in mind Isa. xxi: 9.

What is Babylon? No doubt the churches of Asia well knew what was meant by the word though it has not previously been used in this book. The name is again found in xvi: 19, xvii: 5, xviii: 2, 10, 21. We recall that Babylon was a great city and a powerful empire that in John's time had long ceased to exist. It was in its day the greatest of the world's political powers, exceedingly rich and luxurious, yet easily destroyed (Dan. v: 1, 30). Of course the word here cannot be understood as literally signifying the ancient empire, because of the literary character of the book before us, and the practical purpose which the author had in mind. But it would be the better as a symbol because of its ancient connections and the more suggestive to the Christian reader who would well understand the use made of it, while it would also be the more confusing to the enemies of the Church. From the words of the angel we learn that Babylon is, A. great, and B. she has been grossly wicked and her wickedness has been world wide in its extent. Turning now to xvii: 5, we learn that this is the label or designation written on the forehead of the woman who sits on the scarlet colored beast. The consideration of chapter xvii which follows will show that Rome the Imperial city is meant by this figure. This city had extended her power until she had become mistress over the kings of the earth, and because of her religious character, universal sway, and opposition to the Christians, she would be considered as exceedingly iniquitous in the eyes of our author. Let it here be assumed that this is the correct interpretation, pending the discussion of the subject in chapter xvii.

This angel's message must be looked upon as partly anticipatory of the actual fall of Babylon announced as having really taken place in xvi: 19, and partly as a declaration of the attitude which God had taken to her, and so as a sentence of

condemnation.

4. The third angel, vs. 9-12. Here we have the third member of this angelic succession issuing a counter proclamation to the demands of the beast (xiii: 14 ff). Any who accede to the demands of the second beast shall meet an even more terrible fate than that which the beast would inflict, for in addition to the marks and domination of the beast he shall be under the wrath and curse of God. The punishment is by fire and brimstone without cessation for ever, and is aggravated by the presence of the saints and the Lamb (Christ) who had died for the sins of mankind, and had been denied and rejected by those undergoing punishment. As it is impossible on the one hand for any human being in this world to endure fire and brimstone for ever, and on the other for a spiritual (i. e. a non-material) being to be affected by such material substances as heat and sulphur fumes, the phrase cannot be taken literally, but must be a figurative expression to indicate the intensity and terror of the torment. Perhaps in this world there is nothing harder to bear than fire, or more destructive to all forms of life than fumes of sulphur. In these terrible days when obedience to the Empire meant disobedience to Christ, and vice versa, they must choose which they would serve. These circumstances, terrible as they were, gave them an opportunity to prove their character. The Christians who were genuine would be faithful to Christ, come what may, and thus the trying times would reveal the quiet confidence of Christ's followers and their faithfulness to Him.

5. A voice from heaven, vs. 13. In contrast to the doom that awaits the worshippers of the beast (vs. 9-12) here we have the blessedness in store for the true worshipper of God. In many cases, no doubt, the alternative to the worshipping of the beast would be death, but whether that were the case or not those who died in the Lord from now onward were blessed. This reward to the faithful is made very emphatic by, first, the call of the voice to the seer commanding him to write, and second, by the response of the spirit who confirms, as it were, the words of the voice giving the reason for the blessedness. This reason is likewise two-fold; from all their toils, weariness, and persecution they would be free; and their works would go with them, i. e. death would not mean a break in the continuity of their lives nor a separation from the employments and interests of this

life. They would continue to be worshippers and servants of God. Here the issue is put before them with perfect clearness. Their faithfulness may bring death, but whether it does or not death will be a blessing. How rich in consolation would this be to those called upon to suffer for the name of their Lord; even in death they would be blessed.

6. The harvest scene, vs. 14-16. A. White clouds were common in the Mediterranean and Aegean skies and the white cloud here mentioned may have been suggested in that way. B. The One sitting on the cloud is "like a son of man" and has a golden crown on his head. The person is doubtless the same as that described in chapter i: 13 (which see and also notes), though here he wears a golden crown. That this person is Christ is reasonably certain. C. He has in his hand a sharp sickle. As this was the common harvesting tool of the day, and as the angel proceeding from the temple,—presumably the place where the throne of God was located (cf. xvi: 17)—orders Him to cast it into the earth to reap because the harvest of the earth is ripe, and as He does so and instantly the earth is reaped, we have a clear indication of Christ's coming in judgment, a judgment that is swift and opportune. Judgment is always welcome to the faithful and terrible to the wrongdoer in as much as it brings his merited rewards to each. This picture then would bring much encouragement to the faithful in Christ as it would suggest that there would be an end to the days of terrible suffering through which they were then passing and that they would have their rewards, and their oppressors their just deserts.

7. The vintage scene, vs. 17-20. A. Another angel also has a sharp sickle and like the previous angel comes from the temple. B. Still another angel and the last of this series, comes from the altar of the temple. There is nothing to show whether this is the altar of burnt offering or the altar of incense, both of which are mentioned elsewhere, (cf. vi: 9, xi: 1, and viii: 3, ix: 13). This angel brings to the angelic reaper a message similar to that of vs. 15. C. The angel does as he is bidden and more. Besides gathering the vine of the earth with her clusters of fully ripe grapes, he puts them into the great winepress of the wrath of God, and they are trodden out. But out of them there comes not grape juice but blood bridle-deep on the horses and extending sixteen hundred stadia, (furlongs). The

scene is laid without the city though there is nothing to indicate what city.

What is the meaning of this vintage scene? It certainly is figurative or symbolical. We note that it is the *vine of the earth* that is gathered, that it is cast into the *winepress of the wrath of God,* that it is *blood,* not grape juice, that comes out of the winepress, and that its amount is very great reaching bridle high on the horses and extending some two hundred miles. When these points are borne in mind and the harvest scene of the preceding verses is also remembered only one thing seems to be signified by this picture, and that is that it is a picture again of judgment like that immediately preceding it in vs. 14-16, but more emphatic and complete, coming on the Imperial power whose territory and domain covered practically all of the world as it was then known. The two-fold picture in the harvest and vintage will emphasize the certainty and thoroughness of the coming judgment.

And the announcement is anticipatory just as the announcement of the fall of Babylon (vs. 8) is anticipatory. The harvest of the earth, according to appearances in the vision, or the progress of events in the world, has not yet been gathered, for the Imperial power still holds its sway in the world, but its downfall is certain because of its present conduct and character and that downfall will appear in due time. The particular form of anticipation here found may be well illustrated by the case of Saul. Saul had disobeyed God and rejected His word and as a result God rejected him from being king (1 Sam. xv: 23). But Saul continued to be king until his death (1 Sam. xxxi: 4) though the Lord had previously departed from him (1 Sam. xxviii: 15). He was rejected and cast out by God long before his rejection and downfall became generally apparent through his death and removal from office.

8. The general character and significance of the section (chapter xiv: 6-20) now becomes evident. The first angel brings the gospel, calls upon all to fear and worship God, and warns them of the impending judgment. The second announces the fall of the Imperial power though that fall has not yet become generally manifest. The third announces the results of following the Imperial religion and the fourth (a voice), the results of following the true religion. The remaining three angels are messengers in a double picture of the judgment of the

Imperial power, contained in vs. 14-20. All this is really accomplished in that it is determined by God, but the actual overthrow of Rome has not yet taken place so far as removal from her worldly position is concerned. Thus this section is closely connected with the previous and following ones, and shows that God not only provides for His people in the awful conflict through which they are passing, but that He reveals to them its nature and result as well as their own duty, (cf. Amos iii: 7). The section thus becomes a summary for the whole Apocalypse of John, has much instruction and encouragement for the Christians of the time, and adds considerable color and scenery to the book.

XXVIII

The Preparation for the Plagues. Chapter xv: 1-8.

1. Another great and marvellous sign appears to the seer's view. It is another heptad of angels, but this time having the seven last plagues which complete the wrath of God. Thus (vs. 1), we have the theme of the next section of the book down to xvi: 20.

These are the seven *last* plagues, because they are the last series of calamities recorded in the book, and because in them God is represented as accomplishing the complete overthrow of the Empire (xvi: 17-20), and because therefore God's wrath is completed, there being no need for any further exhibition of it.

2. Vs. 2-4. After introducing the new scene in the first verse, the writer turns aside to give his readers a glimpse of the glorious estate of those who have suffered in their conflict with the Imperial power.

A. They stand on a sea of glass mingled with fire. If this is the same as the one mentioned in iv: 6 the element of fire is added. The shining brightness of the sea of glass is tinged with a fiery redness suggestive of the fiery persecution through which the persons on it have passed, and of the fiery judgment of God on their enemies.

B. On this glassy sea he notices those who have been in conflict with the Imperial power (beast) and have come off victorious. To the ordinary citizen of the province of Asia it would seem impossible to believe that anyone could be victorious in a conflict with this beast. But here is the party of those who have actually attained this distinction. References to the passages indicated and the interpretation of them show that they are the Christians who have suffered. In xiii: 7 the beast makes war with the saints and overcomes them. This is, of course, the external side. The Imperial power does appear to have overcome the Church, but it is only in an external and superficial way that it has done so. In vs. 2 we learn that they do not worship him. While apparently,—and indeed actually, from an outward point of view,—beaten and overcome, and at the mercy of those in power, they are really victorious. And their victory is complete, including all the ways by which he assailed them, the way of religious observance, i. e. *over his image,* cf. xiii: 12-15, the way of trade, business, etc., i. e. *over*

his mark, cf. xiii: 16, 17, and the way of political power as centered in some official, cf. xiii: 18.

C. The throng is not only victorious but jubilant with praise. They have harps which were among the most prominent instruments of praise, and they sing a song of praise to God. Their song is the song of Moses. There is a song of Moses recorded in Ex. xv, and another in Deut. xxxii. The one recorded in Exodus xv appears to be by far the more suitable and we therefore conclude that it is the one meant here. As Moses and the Israelites had just gotten the victory over Pharaoh and the Egyptians and celebrate it in an outburst of song, so the throng on the sea of glass celebrate their victory. They sing also the song of the Lamb, which, of course, is Christ (v: 6, vi: 1, etc.). Thus St. John connects, without confusing them, the Old Testament dispensation and the New.

D. The song is one of great interest. While not a verbatim repetition of that of Moses the words here may be regarded as a summary of it. It recognizes God as Lord, God, Almighty, and King of Saints, characterizes His ways as just and true, and His works as great and marvelous, declares that He alone is holy, that His judgments are apparent, and expresses the conviction that all shall fear and worship Him as well as glorify His name. It is at first sight surprising that there is no direct reference in the song to the conflicts through which the singers have themselves passed. Neither Moses nor Christ is mentioned in it. But such expressions as "great and marvellous are thy works," and "thy righteous acts are made manifest," might indicate that the singers have their own experiences as well as Christ's victories in mind.

3. Vs. 5-8. The writer now returns to the consideration of the seven angels introduced in vs. 1.

A. The first thing he notices is the opening of the heavenly temple which he calls, "the temple of the tent of the witness" (ὁ ναὸς τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου). The "tent of the witness," was of course, the Hebrew tabernacle which contained the tables of the law, the supreme witness or testimony of God. The language here used is very similar to that found in the Old Testament, e. g. Num. i: 50, ix: 15, 2 Chron. xxiv: 6. In chapter xi: 19 the temple, which appears to be identical with the one here mentioned, when opened exposed the ark of the covenant; now it allows the seven angels to pass out. The

temple was filled with smoke proceeding from the glory of God and His power. Smoke in great black clouds covered the top of Mount Sinai when the law was given (Ex. xix: 18, cf. Isa. vi: 4). From these and other references that might be given, and more especially from the fact that the smoke here proceeds from the glory and power of God, we may conclude that the smoke here is indicative of the presence of God in glory and strength. It also adds color to the picture and to the sense of the presence and awful majesty of God. Entrance to the temple was not possible until the series of plagues was past; compare the case of Moses, Ex. xl: 35, and the priests, 1 Kings viii: 11.

B. Seven angels come forth from the temple. That is they come forth from God and act as His agents or messengers. They have each a plague, the nature of which is explained in the following chapter; they are thus messengers of God to dispense His judgments. They are clothed in the pure and white linen characteristic of heavenly beings. They wear about their breasts golden girdles, indicative of their royal position and important function (cf. i: 13).

C. Each angel receives a bowl, not a vial but a wide shallow cup or deep saucer that could be easily emptied, signifying the reception of power to execute judgment; the bowls are of gold which again indicates the majesty and eminence of Him whose mission they discharge. They receive the bowls from one of the four beasts, the representatives of nature (cf. iv: 6ff, v: 14, vi: 1f). Thus the powers of nature are placed at their disposal to carry out the Divine purpose, a hint as to the nature of the coming judgment. The bowls are filled with the wrath of God. In xiv: 10 the wrath of God is represented by a cup filled with wine which men must drink; here it is a bowl filled with an unnamed substance representative of His wrath, which is to be poured out (xvi: 1). The One whose anger is thus displayed is not one like the emperor, or even like the empire, living for a time and then passing away; but one who lives forever.

4. It need only be noted further in his connection, that in this chapter we have a section of the book that might well have been included in the following chapter. It is an introduction to the seven last plagues described there and indicates the preparation for their execution.

XXIX

The Seven Last Plagues. Chapter xvi: 1-21.

1. Vs. 1. The general command is given to the seven angels to proceed to the execution of their mission. As we have been informed (xv: 8) that no one was able to enter the temple while the seven plagues were in progress, we must conclude that the voice comes from some other creature than a man. A reference to vs. 17 where the voice again appears shows that it is from the throne and therefore presumably from God Himself.

The seven plagues that follow have points of resemblance both to the ten plagues of Egypt (Ex. vii—xii) and to the visitations of the seven trumpets (described in chapter viii—xi). Dr. Swete, (The Apocalypse of St. John, p. 200) thus summarizes the relationship "The first, sixth, and ninth of the Egyptian plagues, and the second, third, fifth, sixth, and seventh of the Trumpet plagues are more or less distinctly in view here. Yet the Last Plagues have features peculiar to themselves; the fourth is entirely new, the rest are more or less freshly conceived. On the other hand the differences are deeper and more suggestive. While no personal suffering is inflicted on Man by the first five of the Egyptian plagues, or by the first four of the Trumpet-visitations, he is attacked at the very outset of the present cycle. Again, while the first four Trumpet-plagues affect only a third of the earth, the sea, the fresh water supply, and the lights from heaven, no such limitation appears in the account of the Seven Plagues now about to be described. They are not tentative chastisements but punitive and final."

2. Vs. 2. The first angel goes forth and empties his bowl upon the land. The result is grievous sores on the devotees of the Caesar cult. The similarity of this plague to the sixth Egyptian plague (Ex. ix: 10) is evident. The plague in Egypt attacked the magicians also; and the parallel is the more complete when we remember that the Caesar worshippers were controlled by the magicians of the temples.

3. Vs. 3. The second angel empties his bowl on the sea which immediately becomes as the blood of a dead man so that no living creature in it is able to survive. Here we have the first Egyptian plague (Ex. vii: 14ff) and the second trumpet suggested as probably in the writer's mind. But while in the case

of the Egyptian plague the fish in the river die, and in the case of the second trumpet the destruction is partial, here it is complete.

4. Vs. 4. The third angel pours out his bowl upon the rivers and fountains from which they arise and they too become blood. While in the case of the third trumpet the third part only of the fresh water supply is turned to wormwood so that many die, here it is all turned to blood and we are not told the result.

5. The reason for the second and third plagues is given in vs. 5-7. The angel of the waters does not resent the action of God but rather declares that in this God is holy and just, for they have spilled the blood of the saints and prophets. He also recognizes God as the One who was and is, i. e. the eternal, and declares that those who have to drink the bloody water are getting only their deserts in view of what they have done. The altar is personified and represented as replying that the judgments of God who is omnipotent, are true and just. All this of course adds color and impressiveness to the picture, while emphasizing the events narrated.

6. Vs. 8, 9. The fourth angel empties his bowl upon the sun, but instead of being partly darkened as in the fourth trumpet (viii: 12) a plague of extreme heat results. The result of this is that God is blasphemed by men who recognize Him as the cause of this calamity, and they do not repent of their evils or give Him glory.

If we could determine the exact significance of the phrase, "they repented not," here and in vs. 11 below we would have gone a long way in the accurate interpretation of this book. Does it mean to be A. merely a statement of the fact that they did not repent, without any reference to the purpose of these plagues or the possibilities of their position, or B. does it mean that repentance was still possible for them and that they did not avail themselves of the opportunity to make it and escape from the wrath of God, or C. does it mean that these plagues were designed to show the powers of God, and the follies and evils of sin, and therefore to call evil-doers to repentance? A careful study will show that it is more than a mere statement of the fact that they did not repent. We saw that the design of the calamities described in the seven trumpets was to call to repentance, and we note that even after Babylon is declared to

have fallen the people of God are summoned to come out of her (xviii: 4), that they partake not of her sins and receive not of her plagues. But when we remember that these are the seven *last* plagues and that their nature is destructive and final we conclude that the phrase implies that while repentance is yet possible so far as individuals are concerned, yet it is no longer possible so far as the Imperial power as a whole is concerned, nor was it expected or intended. A life and death conflict is going on and there is no hope that one of the two parties to it will capitulate by repentance now though that may still be possible to some extent and individuals here and there may do so. They rather blaspheme God as the cause of their griefs, and thus their hearts are hardened like that of Pharaoh.

7. Vs. 10, 11. The fifth angel empties his bowl upon the throne of the beast. The result is a great darkness covering his kingdom, and pain so fierce that they gnawed their tongues because of it. The moral result was just the same as in the case of the preceding angels, they not only do not repent but also blaspheme God because of the pains, sores, and darkness from which they continue to suffer.

By "the throne of the beast" we may understand the heart and centre of the Empire itself as is indicated in the phrase "his kingdom became darkened" though it is possible that Rome, the capital city of the Empire may be in the writer's mind. We are not told here what beast is meant, but if it is either of those mentioned in chapter xiii as is altogether probable, the significance is plain. On the whole the beast of xiii: 1ff seems the most likely from the discussion of vs. 13, immediately following.

8. Vs. 12-16. The sixth angel empties his bowl upon the river Euphrates, its waters drying up as a result; then unclean spirits from the mouths of dragon, beast, and false prophet go forth to collect all the kings of the whole world at Armageddon for a great battle. A parenthesis (vs. 15) is inserted calling to continuous vigilance. This passage abounds in interesting points that call for consideration.

A. It is worthy of note that the sixth trumpet also referred to the Euphrates but apart from this there is little similarity between the sixth trumpet and this passage. In the trumpet four angels bound in the river are released and a great host of horsemen appears doing terrible damage; here the river bed is drain-

ed and a great host gathers for a terrible conflict. Possibly as Dr. Swete suggests (id., p. 205) the drying of the Red Sea (Ex. xiv: 21) or of the Jordan (Jos. iii: 17) is in mind, or he may even be thinking of the story told by Herodotus (i: 191) that Cyrus captured Babylon by marching into the city over the drained bed of the Euphrates.

B. With the drying up of the Euphrates the way would be clear for the kings of the east to assemble at Megiddo the great battle-field. Who the kings of the east were we can only guess. Dr. Swete thinks that the Parthians may have been in the mind of the writer both here and in chapter ix: 14f. It seems quite as likely, however, that the seer may have in mind in both cases the ancient oppressors of Israel, particularly the Assyrians or Babylonians.

C. The dragon is of course the hideous monster of chapter xii: 3ff. The beast is the wild beast of xiii: 1ff. But the identity of the false prophet requires some consideration to determine. We observe that here and also in xix: 20 and xx: 10 he is associated with the beast, while in xix: 20 we read that "the beast was captured and with him the false prophet that *did the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image.*" These considerations make it reasonably certain that the false prophet is the second beast of xiii: 11-18.

D. From the mouth of each of the dragon, beast, and false prophet St. John notices an unclean spirit like a frog come forth. While it is literally impossible for a spirit to be in material form like a frog, yet the figure is remarkably suitable, especially when we recall 2 Thess. ii: 8, In the Apocalypse the mouth has great power for good or ill as it is the organ of speech, cf. i: 16 (xix: 15, 21), xi: 5, xii: 15. The spirits are unclean to John because they are, as he says, "the spirits of demons doing signs." The evil spirits come to the kings of the whole inhabited earth as it was known then, compelling them to assemble for a great final struggle.

E. The war is that "of the great day of God the Almighty." Its exact nature has been described by some as internecine, and by others as a united battle of the forces of the world against God. The expression "war of the great day of God the Almighty" might mean either; but the fact that it is the unclean spirits from the mouths of the dragon, beast, and false prophet

that bring the world forces together, not surely to fight one another but to fight Him whom the men blaspheme (vs. 9 and 11); and the further fact that the whole tendency of Roman domination was to put down strife between petty rulers in her dominions, (and when all the rulers of her world-wide dominion were marshalled it would not be to fight one another), indicates that the warfare here is against God. Also the voice from the throne vs. 17, the fall of Babylon in vs. 19, and her receiving the cup of God's fierce wrath, vs. 19, would seem to point in the same direction.

F. The battle field is Har Magedon to which the evil frog-like spirits gather the kings with their forces for the great conflict. The name given is the Hebrew name but nowhere in that ancient language as it has come down to us do we find the name in this form. The name Megiddo, variously spelled, is common and well known, but Har-Megiddo does not occur. The form here may be a transliteration either of הר מגדו or of עיר מגדו The first would mean Mountain of Megiddo; the second, City of Megiddo. Megiddo was a town or city on the south-western side of the great plain of Esdraelon, and close to the range of hills bounding the plain on that side. This plain from time immemorial has been one of the world's great battle-fields. It was the scene of many a conflict in Bible times, (Judges v: 19-21, 2 Kings ix: 27, xxiii: 29, 30, 2 Chron. xxxv: 22), as well as since, and is therefore a suitable figure to represent the conflict by which the evil forces of the world are overthrown.

G. The parenthesis is worthy of note in that it calls attention to the need of continuous vigilance, as God will descend suddenly and unexpectedly like a thief.

H. Thus this plague is a picture of the marshalling of the forces of evil in the world for the great final conflict. There has been no repentance, but with every divine chastisement there has been greater determination than ever before to conquer the forces of righteousness and God.

9. Vs. 17-21. The seventh bowl is poured out in the air and a voice out of the temple from the throne announces that the long expected end of Babylon has come at last: and amid great convulsions of nature it is seen that the world power is completely overthrown and the fierce wrath of God is being poured out upon it, while men blaspheme God for the plague.

A. The voice comes from the throne and out of the temple

and therefore is the voice of God (iv: 2) and so is properly called great, though the adjective may signify loud, or strong, as well. It utters but one word,—"Done," signifying that the object of the seven last plagues is accomplished.

B. But the one word is emphasized by many attending phenomena of nature; there are voices, but their sources are not mentioned; the thunders and lightnings add impressiveness to the scene. John is careful to indicate that this earthquake is the greatest that ever visited the earth, a point specially noteworthy in an age of great earthquakes such as the first century displayed. The hail adds to and completes these demonstrations of nature, and this hail was exceedingly severe. The weight of each stone being about that of a talent. It is impossible to determine the exact weight of the talent as it varied in different times and places; roughly speaking, perhaps an hundred pounds would be sufficiently definite and accurate in this case, as some talents were of less and others of greater weight than even that. An hail storm with stones of that weight would be a plague so exceedingly severe that no living creatures would survive it, unless protected by very substantial shelter. Even in the Egyptian plague the hail killed the herdmen in the fields (Ex. ix: 22ff).

C. The moral effect of these visitations is no better than before (vs. 9 and 11). Although it is the last plague in the last series and brings certain destruction to Babylon, yet Babylon's people, instead of repenting blaspheme God.

D. Amidst the terrible display of natural phenomena Babylon disappears. The city, which is here Rome (as we saw xiv: 8) as the seat of the Imperial power, is now torn asunder so that it is divided into three parts by the great earthquake which also extends its destruction throughout and even beyond the Empire, as the cities of the Gentiles fall. Every island and mountain disappears also; here *mountain* and *island* are doubtless expressions representing the power of Rome, so that in their disappearance the different forms which the power of the Empire may have assumed vanish also. Thus the overthrow is complete and no portion or form of the Empire is left untouched.

10. We thus see that the section of the book comprised in chapters xv and xvi is a section describing judgment, and enlarging on the overthrow of Rome described in xiv: 14-20 and previously announced in xiv: 8. But it is by no means the

whole of the judgment story. Indeed it is only the first of it. It is continued in the following chapters which we now pass on to consider.

XXX

Babylon Ready for Judgment. Chapter xvii: 1-18.

1. One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls of the wrath of God, comes to the seer in his vision, invites him to follow him that he may show him the judgment of the wicked woman who sits upon many waters and has done so much evil in the world. John does as he is commanded and is led in the spirit into the wilderness, where he sees an iniquitous woman sitting on a scarlet colored beast having seven heads and ten horns and full of the names of blasphemy. The woman is gorgeously attired in the most expensive fabrics and jewels, and holds in her hand a golden cup full of the abominations and filthiness of her iniquities. Her name and character are indicated by an inscription on her forehead. She is drunken, not with wine but with the blood of the saints and Christian martyrs. John marvels at the sight, but the angel proceeds to explain the meaning of the picture, which, though not complete is yet so clear that we can have no doubt as to its significance.

2. The angel in his explanation of the picture begins with the beast, and it will be most convenient to follow him in this.

A. The beast is described in vs. 3, and is exceedingly hideous. His color is crimson or scarlet, κόκκινος, i. e. of the color produced by κόκκος, a parasite of the *ilex coecifera* much used for dyeing textile materials; his body is full of, i. e. completely covered with names of blasphemy, while he possesses seven heads and ten horns; also on the beast the woman sits.

B. Before considering the interpretation we may notice the resemblance between this beast and that of xiii: 1ff. Both have seven heads and ten horns. The heads of the beast of xiii: 1ff have the names of blasphemy while the whole body of this beast is covered with them. One of the heads of the beast in xiii: 1ff was wounded unto death but is healed; this beast is described as the one that "was and is not and shall be present." In the other descriptive details of the beast in xiii: 1ff we have many points to which nothing corresponds in the description of this beast, while in xiii: 1ff there is nothing to indicate that the beast has any rider as the one here has.

C. In vs. 8-13 we have the interpretation of this figure, and while many details are not clear yet the general significance is plain. (1) The beast was, and is not, and yet is. This may be understood as referring to Nero who had disappeared (and so was not), but who had reappeared, not in his own person as many expected he would, but in the person of Domitian who was recognized as resembling him. Dr. Swete (Apoc., p. 221) gives several quotations to show this, and points out that with St. John living under Domitian, and unable therefore to refer to him by name, Domitian would take Nero's place and style just as John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah, is called Elijah by our Lord (Matt. xi: 14, Mark ix: 13). (2) The beast's ascent from the abyss would indicate his exceedingly evil origin, and his descent into perdition (ἀπώλειαν) would indicate his fate in the mind of the seer, while the wonder of the common crowd adds a touch of interest to the prediction. (3) His seven heads (vs. 9) are seven mountains on which the woman sits. This clearly indicates Rome, not the city, but Imperial Rome of which the city was the capital and centre, as geographically the city was built on seven hills beside the Tiber. (4) The seven heads are also seven kings, five are fallen, one is, and the other has not yet appeared. Here we reach perhaps the greatest difficulty in the interpretation of this section and opinions of interpreters vary greatly. Where are we to begin and whom are we to consider as kings in making the enumeration? Probably the best course is that taken by Dr. Swete (id., p. 220) and is substantially as follows: The Roman emperors in the first century are Julius Cæsar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, Nerva, and Trajan. Assuming that by "kings" John means emperors, it is probable that Julius Cæsar would not be counted as he was a dictator rather than an emperor though he claimed the title of emperor. Besides it is hardly likely that he would reckon Galba, Otho and Vitellius among the Augustan emperors as they all passed away in one year and might never have been acknowledged in Asia Minor by the people in general. This would leave Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, Nerva, Trajan, and place the passage in the reign of Vespasian (A. D. 69-79), and probably as the expression "the other is not yet come" suggests, towards its close when the accession of Titus

seemed imminent. As he reigned but two years he certainly continued "a little time." The eighth then would be Domitian who was of the same character as the seven and followed much the same methods regarding the Christians as did they, and especially Nero whom he resembled very closely as already stated. In this connection it may be pointed out that the apparent contradiction between the tenth verse and the acceptance of the time of Domitian as the date of the Apocalypse, may be reconciled either by supposing, first, that the writer here incorporates an older apocalypse or re-edits his own work; or second that he purposely transfers himself in thought to the time of Vespasian, and thus interprets past events in a prophetic way,—a method common with apocalyptic writers. (5) The ten horns are kings (i. e. emperors) who have not yet reigned but will reign for short periods, on the one hand supported by the power of the Empire on the other agreeing in using their strength and authority in her interests (vs. 12, 13). The number *ten* here must not be taken literally, but as the symbol of completeness. The period of one hour is allotted to each,—that is a brief time. Thus the full number of emperors determined by God shall come and each have his little day and cease to be, until the full number is complete.

3. The woman who sits upon the beast is described and interpreted.

A. She is described as very iniquitous, having sinned with the kings of the earth and made its inhabitants drunken with the wine of her evils; she sits upon a scarlet colored beast (vs. 3) and many waters (vs. 1); she is attired in the most expensive and luxurious way; she bears in her hand a golden cup full of her iniquities, and on her head a name written indicating her character, while she is drunken with the blood of Christ's saints and martyrs.

B. It does not take many words to explain the meaning of the woman after what has been said about the beast. "The woman that you saw is the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth," vs. 18. After what has been said about the beast and its significance only one interpretation is possible for this,—namely Rome, the city. She was a great city; she sat upon the seven mountains, the seven heads of the beast; her power had extended over practically all of the world as then known; she was exceedingly vile, especially when viewed from

a Christian standpoint, her evil character being conscious, open, and flagrant, and thus fittingly represented as emblazoned on the woman's forehead; and she was mad with the passion to exterminate the Christians, many of whom she had already put to death.

4. The seer observes that the woman while sitting upon her beast is also sitting upon many waters. These are not described more minutely but are interpreted (vs. 15) as peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues, that is, of course, of the Empire.

5. But in all this picture there is an element of doom. The beast ascends out of the abyss and goes into destruction (vs. 8 and 11). The ten horns shall be overcome by the Lamb (vs. 14). Even the emperors that shall arise over the destinies of the Empire shall hate the great city of Rome, make her desolate and naked, and burn her with fire. We know indeed that the emperors were no true friends of Rome. They feared it, hated it, reduced its liberties, took away its power, murdered its leading citizens wishing (like Caligula) that the whole Roman people had a single neck so he could sever it at a stroke, and (like Nero) laying the city in ashes. Thus the Imperial city in her luxury and iniquity would be called upon to suffer the just judgment of God, which would assail her both from within and without. While the Lamb should overcome them even their own emperors would be inspired to do the will of God (vs. 17). What a source of comfort this must have been to the oppressed Christians of Asia Minor as they were assured that their great persecutor, in spite of her power, luxury, and iniquity, must submit to the will and purposes of God who was stronger and greater even than Rome.

6. In this chapter we have a picture of Rome as she appeared to the seer and as she really was,—powerful, proud, rich, wicked, the queen and mistress of the earth yet ready for destruction, and subject to God who is supreme and will one day destroy her for her wickedness. The following chapter tells of her overthrow.

XXXI

Babylon's Fall. Chapter xviii: 1-24.

1. Vs. 1-3. Still another angel descends from heaven. He is very powerful and his glory is so great that the earth is brightened thereby. He repeats the announcement of Babylon's fall already given (xiv: 8). And not only has she fallen, but demons, all foul spirits, and all unclean and hateful birds dwell in her. Her fall is a moral and spiritual one and not a military defeat by a more powerful foe. She has been cast down by her own wickedness, which she has extended far and wide; luxury and iniquity have been her overthrow. Every student of Roman history knows that this is the real reason for the fall of Imperial Rome. There is therefore no need to dwell on the point further than to call attention to the clearness with which the seer discerned its approach.

2. Vs. 4-20. A voice is now heard from heaven instructing God's people to come out of Babylon lest they partake of her sins and punishments.

A. The *voice* may be that of God, as the expression *my* people (vs. 4) would suggest, or that of an angel of the Presence as such expressions as "the Lord God" (vs. 8), and "God has judged" (vs. 20) would indicate.

B. The instruction is to "Come forth, my people, out of her." This, of course, cannot imply that they were to leave the Empire and take up their abode in some remote region of the world. But it calls upon them to practise disentanglement and aloofness from the sins of the Empire.

C. The reason why this command should be obeyed is given, —to avoid participation in her sins and plagues. This is explained at greater length to vs. 20, but may be summed up in the words of the fifth verse, "Her sins have reached unto the heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities." More specifically, because her sins are very great, and God remembers them (vs. 5) and will give to her full punishment (vs. 6-8).

D. The command to punish her (vs. 6-8) must be understood as addressed, not to God's people, but to some agency of destruction, possibly her own kings (xvii: 16ff).

E. The principle of the punishment as stated here must not be considered as vindicative, but as the divine law of punishment

in such cases. The *lex talionis* is common in the Old Testament, and sometimes the evildoer was required to pay double as here (cf. Ex. xxii: 4, 7, 9, Isa. xl: 2, Jer. xvi: 18).

F. The certainty and measure of her punishment is guaranteed by the character of God. He is "strong" (vs. 8) and this fact is emphasized by the position of the adjective in the sentence. Thus the decreed penalty shall be inflicted and it shall come with terrible severity and all the more certainly because she did not expect it.

3. We have now a series of dirges over Babylon's fall, vs. 9-19, uttered apparently by the same voice as vs. 4-8. The whole passage may have been suggested by Ezekiel's lamentation over Tyre (Ezek. xxvii).

A. In vs. 9-10 we have the lament of the kings of the earth over Babylon's (Rome's) fall. By the term *kings* here as in xvii: 18 we may understand either (1) the subordinate and allied princes, or (2) the wealthy and luxurious who were (according to Ramsay) often so styled in the common speech of that time. The kings of client-states in Asia Minor and Syria also visited Rome as occasion required. Each and all of these were, of course, more or less involved in the spirit and evils of Rome. These are represented as lamenting for Rome, but standing at a safe distance themselves to avoid danger. They have shared in her iniquities and favors, but can do nothing to help her in the day of her doom.

B. The merchants of the earth add their contribution to the lament for Rome (vs. 11-16), while, like the kings, they stand at a safe distance. What these chiefly regret is not Rome's downfall so much as the loss of their market. An immense trade from all parts centered in Rome which was the world's great market in that day. The list of articles here given shows the great length to which wealth and luxury had gone in that city, especially as slaves and souls of men are not exempted.

C. A third class—the mariners—add their lament in vs. 17-19. Like the others they keep a safe distance but mourn the passing of the one who made them rich and note the suddenness of her downfall.

4. The Church is called upon to rejoice over her (vs. 20) and we may believe, not in any vindicative way, but because God's purposes have been accomplished and she is freed at last from her scourge, by the just judgment of God.

5. As if all this were not enough to impress the certainty and completeness of the fall of Rome on the reader a further picture is added in vs. 21-24.

A. An angel takes up a stone like a great mill-stone, casts it into the sea, to show how Rome shall perish, i. e. violently, quickly, completely. The violence is especially mentioned, and the completeness is dwelt upon at length.

B. The reason for her overthrow is given also (vs. 23, 24). It is her deception of all races of people by her wickedness, and her murders of the Christians and even of all who were put to death in the world, all of which was done through her extensive commerce.

6. Here we have a picture of the coming downfall of Rome as an outward organization or monstrous creature in the world. Her overthrow as a religious and political force is later described (chapter xix: 11-21).

XXXII

The Thanksgiving to God. Chapter xix: 1-10.

Here we have the great thanksgiving to God following the overthrow of Babylon, and at the same time a glimpse of the position of His followers.

1. The great crowd of people in heaven praise God, ascribing to Him glory, honour, and power, and recognizing the justice of His act in judging, condemning, and destroying Rome; vs. 1-3. There is nothing to indicate clearly whether this is the church on earth or an angelic host.

, 2. The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fall down and worship God, adding their "Amen" and "Hallelujah," representing of course, the Church and nature.

3. A voice from the throne, vs. 5, is probably that of an angel of the Presence. The language precludes the idea of its being that of God. The voice calls on all the servants of God to praise Him, whatever their status. This probably includes both the angelic hosts and the earthly church. There seems to be no way to determine whether this crowd is the same as that of vs. 1, or not.

4. Their answer is a mighty torrent of praise to God especially because A. He reigns, and B. the marriage of the Lamb and His bride is at hand. It is interesting to note that the crowd in vs. 1 praises Him for the judgment He has dispensed, while here the reason is His sovereignty and the approaching marriage of the Lamb. Here we have another instance of the same principle as we saw in xiv: 8. The marriage is announced as at hand, and in one sense really had come, though the conflicts of xix: 11-21 and the thousand years of xx: 2 as well as the other events of chapter xx, transpire before the bride appears in xxi: 2. The attire of the bride is mentioned as fine linen clean and white, which is understood to signify righteousness. This contrasts sharply with that of the wicked woman (xvii: 4, xviii: 16).

5. The angel (of xvii: 1) now addresses the seer and gives him instructions to write that these who are summoned to this marriage supper of the Lamb are blessed, and the angel adds

also that these words are God's true sayings. This solemn claim to truthfulness does not, as Dr. Swete (id., p. 248) points out, imply the literal fulfilment of all details, as we must remember that we are dealing with an apocalypse, which must be interpreted and understood differently from ordinary narrative.

6. The seer is so completely overborne by the greatness of the revelation that has been given him that he prostrates himself in worship before the angel who has shown it to him. This however he is forbidden to do, saying that he also is one of his fellow servants and one of Christ's faithful followers: therefore the seer should not worship him but God.

XXXIII

The Victor and the Slain. Chapter xix: 11-21.

The sky opens and John sees a warrior going forth with his army. An angel invites the fowls of heaven to feed upon the slain. The beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assemble to join battle with the warrior. The battle is fought, the warrior is victorious, his opponents are taken and destroyed, and the birds are filled with their flesh.

Here a number of features call for our consideration.

1. The warrior is clearly and beautifully pictured, and the different elements in the sketch must be noted.

A. He rides a white horse. This probably has no more significance than to suggest the purity and victory of the warrior and to give color to the picture. The rider is not the same as that in chapter vi: 2, although there is some outward similarity.

B. The name of the warrior is "faithful and true." In iii: 14 we have the expression "the faithful and true witness" which undoubtedly designates Christ. In i: 5 Christ is especially designated as "the faithful witness." And while He is not here called a "witness," but is given a military description, the presumption is that the name will here apply to Him, as no one with whom the seer could be acquainted would be so well entitled to the name or designation.

C. In righteousness He judges and makes war. No doubt the writer has in mind the prophecy of the Messiah in Isa. xi: 3, 4, where He is pictured as both a judge and a warrior. When we also recall the corrupt methods of eastern courts and tribunals and the injustice often meted out to the Christians we have further evidence that this is meant to be a description of Christ, as all earthly judges and military men were apt to be unjust in their judgments and in the reasons for their military campaigns. Furthermore in 1 Tim. vi: 15 Christ is designated as a Potentate (*δυνάστης*), and thus would have power both to judge and make war, and in John v: 22 Christ Himself declares that God has committed all judgment unto Him.

D. His eyes are as a flame of fire. A comparison of this with i: 14 and ii: 18 where the designation is certainly applied

to Christ makes it reasonably clear that it is to be understood as applying to Him here.

E. He wears many diadems on His head. This is a new designation, though the dragon (xii: 3) and the wild beast (xiii: 1) each wore diadems. It is impossible to think that they are meant by the warrior here. While Christ has not before been represented as wearing diadems yet it is eminently suitable that he should be so represented, as He is more worthy than either the dragon or the wild beast, and He had already achieved notable victories over temptation, death, etc., while none were as worthy as He to rule.

F. He has a mystic name. This also has not been previously mentioned of Christ, but it is quite in line with what we might expect in such a description of Him as we have before us. Besides, the faithful in Pergamum were to receive a new and mysterious name (ii: 17), the 144,000 had their Father's name written in their foreheads, and the iniquitous woman had a similar designation (xvii: 1). While, therefore, we cannot find in this an evidence that the warrior is Christ, yet we can see in it nothing contrary to that view and something to support it as He is thus represented as superior to, or at least the equal of others in the things that clothe Him with awe.

G. He is clothed with a garment spattered with blood. There is considerable uncertainty as to the exact text and its translation here, but in view of vs. 15, the rendering "spattered" seems best. The garment spattered with blood has in it nothing that distinctively marks its wearer as Jesus Christ, but it is in harmony with the other features of the picture of the victorious warrior and if it is found that we have here a picture of Christ this will not contradict it.

H. His name is called the Word of God. In view of John i: 1ff and 1 John v: 7 the presumption is in favor of the view that this name is a designation for Christ; and although the Gospel and Epistle are probably later than the Apocalypse the conception may have taken shape in the writer's mind.

I. He is followed by the armies of heaven clothed in fine white linen and riding on white horses. The white horses and fine linen again would suggest purity and victory. The armies of heaven here must mean the angelic hosts and not the sun, moon, stars, etc. The saints follow Christ as the Lamb (xvii: 14), but these seem not to be saints but angelic hosts. Again,

while the evidence is not absolutely conclusive the presumption is that the armies of heaven would follow only one who was worthy. Michael fought with his angels (xii: 7) and Christ could have more than twelve legions of angels if necessary (Matt. xxvi: 53). The presumption here again then, is that the warrior is Christ.

J. A sharp sword proceeds from His mouth. This marks His warfare as unique and carried on by the power of evidence, argument, truth, etc., rather than by physical prowess. The similarity of the picture with that in i: 16 can not be overlooked. As Christ's warfare is carried on not so much by physical prowess as by testimony, evidence, and the power of truth, and as i: 16 certainly refers to Christ, we conclude that here we have a clear indication that the warrior is Christ. With this sword he is to smite the nations. This seems rather severe treatment to come from one who has often been referred to as the Lamb in this book. But we must remember that it agrees with the rest of the picture of a warrior riding out to battle, and also is in accordance with the judgment that Christ brings into the world (John iii: 19, 20).

K. He is to rule the nations with a rod of iron. This is a promise to the overcomers (ii: 27) and to the woman's son (xii: 5), who, if correctly interpreted, is Christ. Thus this clause points to Christ as the warrior.

L. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. The figure of the winepress is a familiar one in this book (cf. xiv: 8, 10, 19, xvi: 19). We learned in considering chapter xiv: 17-20 that the winepress of the wrath of God is a picture of judgment. Here we learn that it is the warrior who is treading the winepress, and therefore executing judgment. While it may seem again rather incongruous to think of Christ as exercising judgment yet it is in accord with the description in vs. 11 and 12, which we found pointed strongly to Christ. This passage then means that He executes God's judgments in the world.

M. The name written on His garment and on His thigh,—King of Kings, and Lord of Lords,—leaves no doubt whatever that Christ is meant, when we remember that He, as the Lamb, is so designated in xvii: 14 and also in 1 Tim. vi: 15.

N. There can be no reasonable doubt on the whole, after our consideration of the description clause by clause, that the

author wishes us to see in the warrior a picture of Jesus Christ. There is really nothing in the description against this though there are some features that at first glance might seem to be against it. But there are so many points that are clear and strong that we can have no doubt as to the meaning.

2. The angel standing in the sun can be little more than a feature designed to give color to the scene, but in this it is very effective. The readiness with which vultures and similar birds flock to feed on dead bodies is well known. But the greatness of the coming slaughter of the enemies of Christ and the Church is shown by, A. the angel's standing in the sun, where he could reach the greatest possible area; B. his calling to all the birds flying in mid-heaven; C. the great voice with which he calls; D. the different classes enumerated in vs. 18; and E. the fact that it is called "the great supper of God." These features add much to the impressiveness of the picture.

3. Vs. 19 tells of the assembled hosts of Christ's enemies.

A. The beast may be either the beast of chapter xiii: 1-10, or the beast of chapter xvii on which the iniquitous woman sits. But a careful examination will enable us to see that it is the beast of chapter xiii, that is here meant, though that of xiii: 1-10 and that of xvii are both representative of Imperial Rome, as we have already seen. But it seems better to identify this beast with that of xiii: 1-10 because of his association with the false prophet in the following verse,—and we have already identified the false prophet with the beast of xiii: 11ff, (see discussion of xvi: 13); and because it suits better the plan of this part of the book. In xiv: 8 we have the announcement of the fall of Babylon; in xvi: 16ff Babylon is overthrown in the great battle of Har Magedon; here (xix: 19-21) Babylon as represented in the beast and the false prophet is overthrown; while in xx: 1ff Satan, the dragon of xii: 3ff is himself bound.

B. The kings of the earth. This may mean either the emperors, or rulers of provinces, etc., or persons eminent because of their financial, social, political, military, or religious positions and thus able to control the forces of the Empire.

C. Their armies, no doubt are the military, financial, social, political, religious, and other forces of the Empire controlled by those in positions of authority or leadership.

D. The false prophet is not mentioned in the list of forces enumerated in vs. 19 but he is evidently there as we learn from

vs. 20.

Thus all the forces of the Empire are represented as assembled for the great conflict.

4. The conflict itself is not mentioned or described, though its existence is implied clearly in vs. 20 and 21.

5. The result of it, however, is given.

A. The beast and the false prophet are taken and both cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. In xxi: 8 we learn that the second death is not the *lake* burning with fire and brimstone, but the *portion* of those cast into the lake. This is clear from the original Greek. But in xx: 14 the second death is clearly defined as the lake of fire itself. In xx: 10 we learn, also from the original, that the beast and the false prophet who had previously been cast into the lake of fire, are both, with Satan, to be tormented forever. This is evident from the plural form of the verb, "they shall be tormented." In xiv: 10 it is clear that fire and brimstone are instruments of torment. We conclude then, that the fate of the beast and false prophet here mentioned is not annihilation but a condition in which they would have unending torment and also, of course be shorn of their power.

B. The rest,—that is the kings of the earth and their armies, were slain with the sword of the warrior. This with the closing words of the verse, that all the birds were filled with their flesh, shows that in the case of the kings of the earth and their armies the result of the conflict was complete destruction and so different from the end of the beast and the false prophet.

C. All the fowls are filled with their flesh. This of course, completes the figure of the great supper announced in vs. 17, the chief function of which is to give color to the scene but which also would help to confuse the enemies of the Church and prevent their understanding of the book.

6. Here we have a description of the overthrow of Rome as a political organization (the beast) and a religious system (the false prophet). It now appears that Christ is the one by whom she is conquered, and the one who dispenses to her the righteous judgment that she so richly merits. This he does, not in any outward or physical way, but by intellectual and spiritual methods,—the word which proceeds out of his mouth. The overthrow is complete and permanent and will be carried to the very instigator of the evil, Satan himself.

XXXIV

Final Conflicts and Victories. Chapter xx: 1-15.

We come now to the last scenes in the picture of the overthrow of the evil powers that for so long had afflicted the Church and blasphemed God.

1. In vs. 1-3 we have the binding of Satan pictured.

The angel descending from heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand, laying hold of the dragon, binding him, and casting him into the pit, is of course just the apocalyptic way of speaking of God's power in overthrowing the dragon, which is here plainly declared to be Satan himself. He is not yet slain or destroyed, but simply imprisoned for a thousand years, i. e. not for a literal period of a thousand years, but for a long definite period which is complete according to the purposes of God. He had been cast out of heaven already (xii: 9), now he is cast out of the earth to his own place the entrance of which is closed and sealed. When the time of his imprisonment is fulfilled he shall, however, be allowed to go free.

2. The first resurrection. Vs. 4-6.

A. What can this be? Let us note that it is distinctly against the principles of apocalyptic interpretation to assume that it is a literal coming to life of those who were literally dead. We may also observe that the Greek word here usually translated "resurrection" is ἀνάστασις and literally means a standing up, or rising up, and is so used in Luke ii: 34. Also we should note that this ἀνάστασις, whatever it is, is confined to the martyrs and confessors of Christ and the rest of the dead have no part in it (vs. 4 and 5). Furthermore, although the Roman Empire and its persecutions of the Christians have long since passed, we have no historical record of any who, since the time of John rose from the dead literally. Still again, the vision presents a state in which Christ and His followers are in a position of authority, living and reigning. And if we have been right in our view that the previous nineteen chapters of the book deal with human affairs, then it seems reasonable to conclude that this one does also. The second death has no power on those who have part in the first resurrection. The cry for vengeance on those who dwell on the earth, of the souls under the altar in

vi: 9 would not be satisfied by a mere return to life.

The question will come, is it possible to find any interpretation which will do full justice to all these points, and will also be in line with the interpretation we have given the rest of the book? The answer to such a question must be yes,—for if we here understand ἀνάστασις in its literal sense as a "rising up" and take it to be a description of a reformation in the country in which there was a reversal of the old order, we have a conception which appears to meet all the conditions required. Chapters xvi, xix tell us of the passing of Rome, and the old order; this passage, if this view is correct, tells us of the establishing of a new one. It is the newer, fuller, and more exalted life of the Church in union with Christ after her blasphemous opponent and persecutor is destroyed. It is a picture of society in which Christian sentiment rules and positions of authority and influence are filled by Christians rather than by pagans and persecutors as in the days of John. Perhaps the best word to describe it is *uprising* though *arising, awakening,* or *renaissance* would be almost as good. It is the constructive side of reformation in the country and age,—the destructive side, in which the old is condemned and discarded, being described in this case in the sixteenth to the nineteenth chapters. This view is strictly in accord with the principles of apocalyptic interpretation, gives a fair and reasonable meaning to the Greek word ἀνάστασις, is in harmony with the interpretation adopted for all the proceeding chapters, and is fully in accord with the answer given to the martyred saints who cry for vengeance (chapter vi: 9ff). On this view we have here a prophecy of a time to come when political and social conditions would be the exact reverse of what they were in John's day,—when Christ would reign instead of Cæsar, and Christians instead of their persecutors, when justice would be meted out to all and the evil be overthrown.

The first resurrection is therefore the newer, fuller, and more exalted life of the Church in union with Christ after her persecutor and blasphemous opponent is destroyed.

B. The first resurrection is only for the faithful of Christ (vs. 4) and they are both blessed and holy (vs. 6). Also judgment is given to them. In view of verses 11-15 and the general sense of this passage the judgment must mean that they are the recipients of judgment from a judge, justice now being done them, and not that they are dispensers of judgment, sitting as

judges or a court of judgment. We may well believe that in this verse the seer has before him the Church collectively, rather than a number of particular individuals.

C. The first resurrection implies a death, especially in view of vs. 4 and vs. 14. What is this death? It may be first the death of the Christians referred to in vs. 4; or second the passing of the old order and especially of Rome as pictured in the chapters immediately preceding; or third it may be the living death of continual persecution that fell to the Church. Probably the correct view would include all of these. It is impossible that it could be the death that ordinarily falls to human beings as the normal and ordinary end of life for that is seldom in view in the book and not at all in this passage.

D. The rest of the dead do not again live till the thousand years are finished. The rest of the dead, on the view here adopted must be those who were outside the Church, the great heterogeneous mass of people that made up the Empire either in their individual or corporate capacity.

E. We may find historical fulfillment of this in the new age beginning with the conversion of Constantine and the Empire. Probably however there is some approach to a chronological order in the visions of this part of the book, in which case the overthrow would precede the ascension of the Church to power and prestige. For a long time before the conversion of Constantine the power of the Empire was weakening and the new era came as its climax and result. But even if the historical sequence of events was in the author's mind as the great scenes before us were penned, we must not press it too far. It is rather the working out of great principles that he foresees, and while these will follow an historical order in a general way, yet they will be so interwoven that they cannot be entirely dissociated.

3. The last great conflict. Vs. 7-10.

A. At the end of the thousand years Satan is to be loosed from his prison and is again to go forth to deceive the peoples of the world. This of course is an apocalyptic picture of a new issue in which the powers of the world are aroused by Satan, to attack and overthrow the Church. The future tense is used, for while the language and description is apocalyptic it is here prophetic as well. The thousand years of the domination of the Church is of course the same as the thousand years of the imprisonment of Satan.

B. The thousand years have made no change in Satan's methods, for as soon as he is free once more he is again at his old work of deception. His activity is world-wide and the movement among all peoples is not directed by an imperial policy but by a common impulse.

C. The nations or races of the world are called Gog and Magog, and here the two are no doubt parallel. According to Ezek. xxxviii, xxxix, Gog is the prince of Meshech and Tubal, and Magog is his land. Scholars differ as to the tribes or races intended originally but it seems reasonably clear that they are here synonymous with the races of the world or the chief among them or their rulers.

D. The number of the hosts is very great. This is indicated by the statements that it is as the sand of the sea, and that they go up on the breadth of the earth.

E. They encircle the camp of the saints and the beloved city. These two expressions are apparently parallel, meaning the Church, though the expression, the beloved city might be understood as referring to Jerusalem either as the historic centre of the Hebrew and Christian religion, or as a reference to the Hebrew element in the Church.

F. The progress of the battle is not given nor is it even stated that there was a battle. The multitude is destroyed by fire from heaven, which of course means, overthrown by the power of God without any particular effort on the part of the Church.

G. The Devil who deceived them is cast into the lake of fire, to be tormented day and night eternally with the beast and the false prophet.

H. The whole passage (vs. 7-10) is of course a figurative or apocalyptic description of what the seer regards as the last conflict between the world and the Church. Stripped of its apocalyptic coloring it simply means that after the Church of Christ has been in control for the divinely appointed time her position would be challenged by the world and a universal attempt would be made to overthrow her. This however would end in failure, and the supremacy of the Church would be finally established while the evil power in the world would be finally overcome. We must remember that this conflict is on the earth (vs. 8, 9), that it has no connection with the Roman supremacy which has already passed (xix: 19-21) and that it finally settles the power of Satan in the world. This makes

it refer to something that does not seem yet to have happened in the world but to something which may happen and that, in the not very distant future,—when the powers of evil will make a last great struggle against righteousness, as expressed chiefly in the Church though not necessarily confined to the outward organization of that name, but rather to the Church as it is *sub specie eternitatis*. In as much as Satan is not annihilated in the lake of fire but is tormented continually, we may conclude that when that time comes evil will not be unknown but will be so thoroughly mastered and so vigorously opposed that it will be able to accomplish little or nothing of its old devastation in the world. When that time will come we cannot tell, but the fact that the Christian Church is now alert and active as she has probably not been for many centuries might indicate, that before long it may appear.

4. The judgment. Vs. 11-15.

A. The great white throne and its occupant recalls iv: 2 where the vision began with a throne and its Occupant. Here, as there, the name of the occupant is not given, but we have little difficulty in determining that point from the statements made regarding him. Heaven and earth flee before his face (vs. 11); all the dead both great and small stand before the throne (vs. 12); the whole picture leads us to believe that he sits as a judge (vs. 12 and 13) although it is not actually said that this is the case; also frequently in this book God is looked upon as a Judge, (cf. vi: 10, xvi: 7, xix: 2). In view of all these points we must surely say that the throne is the throne of God and that God Himself is its Occupant, sitting as a Great Judge.

B. The heavens and the earth flee before the face of the Judge on the throne. What are these? In the light of the meaning of the passage generally we may assume that they are the old order, which is described as having lasted a thousand years. This is confirmed by a reference to xxi: 1, the only other passage in the book where the two words occur together and are used in the same sense.

C. The dead, are the people of the past, the Christians as well as the non-Christians.

D. The books that are opened are of course the records or the recollections of what these people were in their lives, and especially of their deeds. The other book, which is the book of life, evidently contains a record of those who are righteous as

we learn from iii: 5 and xiii: 8. This book of life is not a roll of the elect who are living at the time of this judgment as it is the *dead* that are judged and to whom reference is here manifestly made.

E. The dead are *judged*. The sentence is passed on them, and the verdict is according to their works as these have been recorded in the books. While God is evidently the occupier of the throne it is not definitely said here that He is the one who pronounces the sentence though the general sense of the words would lead us to think so. It is not said, either, how the judgment or sentence is expressed. The whole tenor of the passage, when taken in connection with the whole of these two chapters (xx and xxi) as we have been led to interpret them, would indicate that the judgment is expressed by the aroused attitude of the people of the time in which it takes place. We have here the second "uprising" which, as we saw in the case of the first, is an advance to new and higher life and a judgment on and condemnation of the past.

F. The sea, death, and Hades, all give up their dead. That is, all the people of the past are included, none left out.

G. Death, Hades, and all not found written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire to share the fate of the beast and the false prophet in unending torment.

H. This lake of fire is the second death, and as we learned in our study of xix: 20, a state of unending torment in which the tormented are also shorn of their power. Into that state death and Hades are now cast. Again keeping in mind the fact that this book is an apocalypse, the aim and purpose which its author had in mind, and the interpretation we have reached so far, as well as the characteristics of this punishment (lake of fire) can we find anything in human experience that corresponds to it, or may be fairly signified by it? Yes we can. Every "uprising" of a people or a race is characterized, not only by the destruction of the evil but also by a continuous verdict of condemnation pronounced on it by all future ages. We have not yet ceased to condemn the evils of slavery, nor the evils of the Spanish inquisition, nor the iniquities of the persecution of the early Christian Church, nor will a people who have knowledge of their previous history and an increasing sense of Christian ideals ever cease to denounce them. This then, we conclude, is the lake of fire which the seer here describes. This second

death of course has no power over those who steadfastly opposed the evil in the days when it was supreme; such were blessed, having part in "the first uprising."

I. The second death seems to imply a second uprising, even as the first uprising implied a first death. This second uprising is of course the advance to the newer and higher life gained by the destruction of the evils which have been condemned and destroyed.

5. In this chapter of the book we have a picture of the final overthrow of the evils that assailed the Church. By the capture and disposition of the beast, the false prophet, and Satan (xix: 20, xx: 3) the Church reaches such a position of freedom, authority, and influence that the world is no more deceived by them. This is the first great step in advance and it is held for a long time described here as a thousand years. At the end of this long period the powers of evil, which have been held in subjection by the influence of the Church, will again attempt to assert themselves and a great struggle will ensue, the result of which will be an overthrow of the powers of evil so complete that they never again will be able to assert themselves, but unbroken peace and bliss shall prevail. This is described in xxi: 1-xxii: 5.

The question arises, has this stage been reached in the Christion dispensation and if so when? The answer is, that if we accept the change that took place in the time of Constantine as a fulfillment of the first resurrection, the second does not seem yet to have been accomplished, but the time in which we now are appears to be such that it may result in such an issue. The vigor of the different branches of the Christian Church as expressed in world-wide missionary activity, opposition to the liquor traffic, the application of the gospel to the removal of all social, political, commercial, and other evils, and the promotion of social righteousness of every sort; the rise of the peace movement and the new sense of international justice, as well as the continued emphasis on the necessity for personal and individual purity, seems to show that the final conflict may be at hand. Indeed it may be possible that one phase of it has just come in the form of the great European war, which is certainly the greatest since the time of Napoleon and probably the greatest in the world's history. It seems certain that the Church is facing her duty as never before

and is grappling with the evils in the world as never in the past. If the present rate of progress can be maintained for a century or two it looks as if the days pictured in the latter part of this chapter will have come.

XXXV

The New Heavens and the New Earth. Chapters xxi: 1-xxii: 5.

We now reach the last great section of the second vision, and of the book,—a passage that must have been rich in comfort and encouragement for those to whom it was originally written, and which has been of inestimable benefit to all Christ's people since. It contains an account of a new heaven and earth, the most notable feature of which is a magnificent city. His servants serve Him and among them He dwells abundantly supplying their every need.

1. Let us note, in the first place, that the description here cannot possibly be ever literally realized in this world. No city comes down from the skies as this one is represented as doing, but is built up on the earth. The names on the gates and foundations are improbable. It is beyond belief that the foundations of the city wall should be of the precious stones named, or that the streets should be pure gold, or that it should be a perfect cube, every edge of which is some 1,500 miles in length (and especially is it beyond belief that a city should extend that distance into the air). Much more improbable is it that a city of that size should be made of pure gold. Then if it is in the world it would have day and night, even though its artificial illumination were so brilliant that night would scarcely be recognized. Indeed the more this description is studied the more impossible does its actual literal fulfillment appear. And not the least objection to such a view is the statement that each of the twelve gates is of a single pearl—can pearls as large as this ever be found?—and the difficulty of finding anywhere in the world a suitable situation for such a city.

2. But the impossibility of any literal fulfillment of this in the world taken in connection with the general nature and purpose of the book as we have found it so far, and the nature of this description itself, make it an admirable picture of a blissful condition in the future in the literal world.

3. A. The new order. Vs. 1-8. The first verse taken in connection with xx: 11 seems to mean that a new order appears in the world, the old order having passed away. The sea, as

in xiii: 1 would be a fit picture of that great agitated mass of unregenerated humanity out of which national and social movements come, and it has passed away.

B. This new order in the world is pictured more particularly by a city, called the *holy* city, the new Jerusalem, which is spoken of as *coming down from God out of heaven.* Jerusalem, of course, was the centre of the Jewish religion, and also in a very real sense, the centre and source of the Christian religion since it was there that our Lord was crucified (xi: 8), but spiritually it might be described as *Sodom and Egypt* and thus would be a fair representation of the nature of the world in John's day. To call the central feature in the new order the new Jerusalem would therefore mark it as essentially religious in the true sense of being itself pure. This is confirmed by its *coming down from God out of heaven,* and beautifully adorned like a bride for her husband. As this city is described more fully in vs. 9-xxii: 5 we may defer its further consideration till we come to that section.

C. In vs. 3 John hears a great voice out of heaven announcing that God now dwelt with men. The voice is doubtless that of an angel of the Presence (as in xvi: 17 and xix: 5) and not that of God Himself. This surely makes it clear that the new order is on the earth. The words of the verse in at least three distinct phrases point this out, (1) "The tabernacle of *God* is *with men,*" and not that the tabernacle of men is with God, (2) and He shall *dwell with them,* not, they shall dwell with Him, (3) and He shall *be with them,* not, they shall be with him. Besides this the verse all through shows the closeness of relationship between God and His people that will characterize the new order. We may observe here a slight difference in the significance of the word "heaven" in verses 2 and 3 where it signifies the skies and stands for the invisible abode of God and His angels from its meaning in vs. 1, where it indicates the earthly order.

D. The closeness and richness of the relationship of God to His people in the new order is further indicated in vs. 4, as wiping all tears from their eyes. This would be especially consoling to the persecuted Christians to whom John wrote, as their tears must have been abundant. And this consolation would be much enriched by the words that follow, assuring them that in that new order there shall be no more death, sor-

row, crying, or pain, all of which they were forced to bear continually.

E. The words of vs. 5 further confirm our conclusion that a new order on the earth is meant. Here we read that the One who sat on the throne (cf. iv: 2, xx: 11, 12, etc.) and of course is God, said, "Behold I make all things new." The "all things" as John and the Church would understand the expression, would particularly mean all things earthly.

F. Lest there should be any doubt as to the certainty of this coming to pass, John adds in vs. 6-8 the assurance he received that it would certainly happen. The Occupant of the throne, —God Himself who is the First and the Last, and thus able to carry out His promises,—speaks and declares He will do it giving the thirsty to drink freely of the water of life and the overcomer an inheritance in this blissful order but all evil-doers their portion in the lake of fire.

4. In the remainder of this chapter and the first five verses of the next, this city, the new Jerusalem is described more in detail. One of the seven angels of xv: 1ff carries John away in the spirit to a great and high mountain where he sees it.

A. As early in the book as iii: 12 this new Jerusalem was mentioned. A holy city had been mentioned in the Old Testament (Dan. ix: 24) and Jerusalem was thus designated in the time of Christ (Matt. iv: 5 and xxvii: 53) but it was in ruins when this book was written. Paul and his school had in mind a heavenly city similar to that which John here describes (Gal. iv: 26, Phil. iii: 20, cf. Heb. xi: 10), and it may have been from these passages or from non-canonical Jewish writings which abound in the hope of an ideal Jerusalem, that the writer got his suggestions for this passage.

B. The new city descends out of heaven from God (vs. 2 and 10) by which her divine character and purity are signified. She is actually described as holy in vs. 10.

C. She is said to be prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (vs. 2) which probably designates her beauty, especially spiritual beauty. Also she is described as "the bride, the wife of the Lamb." The Lamb of course is Christ as we have already seen (v: 6, xiii: 8, xiv: 1, etc.). The thought of a divine marriage is common in the Old Testament (see Hos. ii: 19, Isa. liv: 5f, Ezek. xvi: 8f). In the New Testament we find similar thoughts regarding Christ and the Church (see Mark ii: 19,

Matt. xxv: 1ff, Matt. xxii: 2ff, John iii: 29, 2 Cor. xi: 2, Eph. v: 25, 32). John in this book makes use of these ideas as far as they suit his purpose, and we find him speaking of the bride and her attire, the marriage and the supper, (xix: 9, xxi: 2ff, xxii: 17). That the redeemed and purified race of people forming the new order is spoken of as the bride of Christ, must be understood as indicating the closeness of their relationship to Christ and their preciousness to Him as well as His care and love of them.

D. The splendor and excellence of the new order and its people are expressed by a lengthy description of the magnificence of the city, its glory and light (vs. 11), wall (vs. 12, 14, 17-18), the twelve gates (vs. 12, 13), its perfect symmetry (vs. 16), its richness (wall of jasper,—vs. 18; city of pure gold,—vs. 18; foundations garnished with precious stones,—vs. 19, 20; the gates each of a single pearl,—vs. 21; street of pure gold,—vs. 21). The things not needed in the city also show the splendor and excellence of the new order;—no temple for God and the Lamb are its temple (vs. 22), has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God and the Lamb supply it with light (vs. 23), and it has no night (vs. 25). The peoples and their kings bring their glory and honor into it, while its beneficient light falls on the nations of the saved (vs. 24, 26). This elaborate description of the riches and grandeur of the city adds much to the coloring of the scene and the impressiveness of the picture.

E. The new order includes all that is good. Again this is graphically and impressively shown in this wonderful picture. The names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel are written on the gates (vs. 12), and the twelve apostles of Christ on the foundations (vs. 14), God and the Lamb are in it (vs. 22, 23), the nations walk in its light (vs. 24), while they and their kings bring their glory and honor into it (vs. 24, 26), the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it and His servants serving Him (xxii: 3), seeing His face, and marked as His (xxii: 4). Even the river of life and the tree of life are there (xxii: 1, 2). Indeed all whom Christ recognizes as His are there (xxi: 27).

F. The new order excludes all that is evil (xxi: 27). There is no night there (xxi: 25), nor curse (xxii: 3), nor death, sorrow, weeping, nor pain (xxi: 4), nor any evil-doer (xxi: 8).

G. The people in that new order rule, and their rule is eternal (xxii: 5). This would seem to mean that the government is a form of democracy with God and Christ at its head.

H. The new order is catholic, the gates of the city standing open always on all sides (xxi: 25).

I. Possibly the form of the city as a perfect cube (xxi: 16) may suggest the solidity, stability, and permanence of the new order. As a stadium was some 600 feet we have the city almost 1,500 miles to the side, a size unthinkable for any actual city and fitting only for a symbol of greatness.

5. If the view here taken, that this section presents a picture of an ideal condition to be realized in this world, is correct, it is plain that up to the present it has not been fully realized, though if the apparent rate of progress made during the past century in the world by the Christian forces can be maintained for a few more centuries, it may be approximated to some extent. But we must remember that however much this is considered as an ideal to be realized in the future, it is presented to the suffering Christians to whom John writes as an ideal for their encouragement and one in which they were to have a part; chapter xxi: 7, 8, shows this to be the case. Along the same line, though less conclusive, are the words (of xxi: 24) "the kings of the earth bring their glory into it." As we look at the picture we must admit that much in it was fulfilled in the Christianity of those days and in the ages that have since intervened. Perhaps the words of Dr. Swete (Apocalypse of St. John, p. 302) best summarize the matter, "The Holy City which passes before the mind of St. John is the Ideal Church as conceived in the purpose of God and to be realized in His own time. So far as this conception is purely spiritual the powers by which it can be converted into actuality have been in the possession of the Church from the first, and the results are manifest in the moral triumphs of Christianity. Already the many colors of the New Jerusalem and the flashes of its crystal luminary may be seen by those whose eyes are not closed against the heavenly vision; men slake their thirst in the River, and nations find healing in the leaves of the Tree. But as a whole the ideal is still far above us, nor will it be reached till a new age is inaugurated by the Lord's Return." To the extent in which the Christians of John's day had come into living fellowship with Christ, turned from evil, and faithfully did their Lord's will even in

the face of hardship and death they had a part and share in it; and to the extent in which we do the same we have a share. But although it has been in the world in some degree all these centuries, blessing the world and doing it good, yet its full realization in the world can not come until all the evils, now so plentiful and arrogant, are forever banished and righteousness covers the earth as the waters the sea. For that time we must wait, but we will wait with confidence and hope, actively and earnestly striving to do His will, and remembering that His word shall not pass away and that the promise is certain and the reward sure.

XXXVI

The General Conclusion. Epilogue, xxii: 6-20.

1. The end of the visions vouchsafed to John has come, the splendid picture of the New Jerusalem forming their culmination. Only the closing words remain to be recorded, and this is done in the portion of the book now before us.

2. The chief difficulty in this portion of the book is to determine the speakers. Is it, for instance, the same person who utters the words of vs. 6 and vs. 7, and again the words of vs. 9-11, and vs. 12f. Various views are possible.

A. It may be argued that the speakers are different and that John is not careful to distinguish them, e. g., that the "he said" at the beginning of vs. 6 refers to the angel of xxi: 9, 15 and xxii: 1, while vs. 7 is the words of Christ. Similarly in vs. 9-11, and vs. 12f. Certainly in vs. 16 we have the words of Christ. And it must be admitted that this would be in general accord with the situation presented in the book. But it seems impossible that the words of vs. 7 should be spoken by the angel unless we are to understand them as referring to a coming for him like that spoken of in the book so often as the coming of Christ. Similarly with the words of vs. 9-11 and 12. But when we come to vs. 13 and 16 it is impossible to believe the angel could have used them of himself and they must be the words of Christ either spoken directly or on His behalf by another.

B. However, another view is possible. We must recall the words with which the book opens (i: 1) "The Revelation of Jesus Christ . . . and he sent and signified it by his angel," also the words of xxii: 16, "I Jesus have sent my angel to testify to you. . . ." These show that the revelation was given through the mediation of an angel, and in xix: 10 and xxii: 8 John recognizes the presence and assistance of a mediating angel. Also we must remember that the mediating angel in xxii: 9 claims to belong to the class of prophets, and various Old Testament prophets spoke for God in the first person without indicating that the words were other than their own, e. g. Isa. xli: 1-13 following Isa. xl: 28-31 is a passage of this class and

it is not till we reach xli: 14 that we learn that the words are God's, spoken on His behalf in direct narration by the prophet.

C. Perhaps the best solution of the problem is by a combination of both of these views. In vs. 6 the "he said" at the beginning seems clearly to refer to the angel as the speaker while in vs. 7, the same angel continues to speak but on behalf of God, using the first person for the sake of vividness. In vs. 8 John is certainly speaking but the mediating angel is at hand, speaking again in vs. 9, continuing to the end of vs. 11 but with vs. 12-15 again speaking on behalf of Jesus, though using the direct narration once more. With vs. 16, Jesus Himself seems plainly to be speaking directly. But who speaks the words of vs. 17, 18, 19, and 20, Jesus, the angel, the seer, or someone else? On the whole the most reasonable and natural view seems to be that we have the direct words of Jesus in vs. 16, that in vs. 17-19 the words are those of John reporting further what he has also heard, while in vs. 20 we have the response of the seer. If this view is correct it will help us to understand the significance of the passage and its meaning.

3. Several points in this section call for comment.

A. The certification of the genuineness of the revelation is noteworthy. First, the angel indorses the revelation, describing the sayings as *faithful and true.* He further declares that it originates with God, is given through His angel, and is for the benefit of His servants that they may know what is soon to come to pass (vs. 6, 10ff). Second, the seer indorses it, declaring that he saw and heard these things (vs. 8). Third, Jesus Himself indorses it (vs. 16ff) declaring that He has sent His angel to bear this testimony to them and enhances His testimony by adding some of His characteristics. All this certification would increase the authority and interest of the book for those to whom it was sent,—those in the churches (vs. 16).

B. The openness of the revelation is mentioned. It is not to be sealed (vs. 10). This is in striking contrast to the instruction given to Daniel (viii: 26 and xii: 9). The circumstances are the very reverse of those in Daniel, however, for there the time was far distant while here it is at hand.

C. The exhortation to read and study the contents of the book is given and a blessing pronounced on those who do so and keep what is there told them (vs. 7, 14). Thus the book ends as it began (i: 3) with blessing on its devout students.

D. The repeated assurance of the immediate fulfilment of what is stated in the book. It was given to show to His servants *the things that must shortly come to pass* (vs. 6). He comes quickly (vs. 7, 12, 20). The time is at hand—indeed so near at hand that change is impossible as the habits and attitude of people are fixed now, and no further opportunity will be given for repentance or apostacy (vs. 10ff). Here again the book ends as it began (i: 3). As this is the last thought in the book but the final benediction, and as it is very emphatic because of its frequent repetition, and as the value of the book both for those to whom it was first addressed and for people of all time afterwards, is greatly affected by the fulfilment of this declaration, we should ask whether it has been fulfilled or not. Must we say that still He has not come though more than eighteen hundred years have passed since this repeated promise of His speedy return was given? Perhaps it might even be said that a large part of the Christian Church has ceased to look for His coming. And if the Apocalypse fails on this point which seems open to the test of history, what of the other matters of the book that we cannot test? There can be no serious doubt that on this point the words were intended by their author, and would be understood by their first readers in their natural, literal, obvious sense, which certainly would not be eighteen hundred or two thousand years in the future. If this is the coming of Christ referred to in this book it is long since past, though He has not yet come again in bodily form. Indeed none of the many assurances of His coming in the book say that He is to come *in bodily form*. And if some of the scenes depicted seem to imply that, let us remember that we are dealing with *an apocalypse* which must be interpreted differently from ordinary narrative. We have seen that the Christian Church of John's day and especially the Christians to whom he wrote this book, were in the midst of a great crisis of such tremendous importance that the world's future depended on it. Paganism and Christianity were in a life and death conflict and the issue was one that would influence every age after it. In the light of the results of that prolonged and terrible conflict surely it is not too much to say that Christ was in it,—that He came and was coming when the words of our author were penned, going forth conquering and to conquer. In that conflict Christ and Christianity lay hold on the world so that the Gospel triumphed. And all who fol-

lowed Christ and like Him endured the shame, the persecution, and the cross reigned with Him. This could not have been if Christ had not come in those awful years; and surely it constitutes a coming of Christ, quite as real and important as His first coming in Palestine less than a century before. This is the Coming of Christ and this the triumph of His Cause that John prophesied throughout the book, and his ability to see and declare it was what made him a prophet of God and his apocalypse a real prophecy.

E. The penalty for adding or taking from the things that are written in this book is strongly asserted (vs. 18, 19). It may have been suggested by Moses' words in Deut. iv: 2. Writers sometimes protected their works by adding a solemn warning to the scribe to correct carefully his copy. If the words before us are intended in this sense they have not been completely successful as there are many manuscript variations in the text of the Apocalypse. We may be sure, however, that the charge was intended to go deeper than this and to include the deliberate falsification or misrepresentation of the divine message. While no honest copyist, translator, or interpreter would incur the penalty because of unintentional errors, yet the warning should restrain from all levity in handling the book.

F. Several characteristics of Christ are mentioned in the passage (1) He is spoken of as the first and the last (vs. 13) by which His infinitude is signified. In some passages of the book the expression seems to be used of God as distinct from Christ (e. g. xxi: 6 and perhaps also in i: 8), but in others (i: 17 and xxii: 13) Christ seems plainly to be meant. Either John does not distinguish closely between the Father and the Son in this book, or he identifies the Son with the Father as in John x: 30. (2) He is the root and offspring of David (vs. 16, cf. v: 5 and notes), another way doubtless of expressing His infinitude. He is the beginning and end of the whole Davidic household and the great realization of its hopes. (3) He is the bright, the morning star (vs. 16). Just as a star of exceptional brightness precedes the sunrising and thus ushers in the day, so He ushers in the new Day of God. We now see that the promise of ii: 28 was that Christ would impart Himself to the overcomer. (4) He brings His reward with Him (vs. 12, 17). The magnificence of Christ loses nothing in the closing sentences of the book.

G. The response to the announcement of the immediate coming of Christ is general and hearty. (1) The spirit (vs. 17) repeats it. By πνεῦμα (spirit) here we should probably understand, not the Holy Spirit in the strict or general sense, but rather the Holy Spirit as expressing Himself in prophetic utterances, the spirit that inspired to spiritual and prophetic discernment. (2) The bride (vs. 17, cf. xix: 7, xxi: 2, 9) of course is the body of Christ's people. (3) The seer himself (vs. 20). (4) Besides all who hear and all in need are invited to come.

H. Those who keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book (vs. 7) and those that wash their robes (vs. 14) are declared to be blessed. Of course only real Christians could be of either class. In vs. 14 two reasons are given, first, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and second, that they may enter by the gates into the city. The city is apparently that of xxi: 1—xxii: 5 and the tree of life that of xxii: 2. Here, too, we see the meaning of the promise given to the overcomer (ii: 7). Those not blessed are the evil doers of all sorts who are excluded and classed with the dogs (cf. Ps. lix: 6, 14).

XXXVII

The Final Benediction. xxii: 21.

This remarkable and exceedingly interesting and instructive book closes with the benediction. While this sort of ending was unusual in apocalyptic writings it is particularly suitable here since this book, as Swete remarks (id., p. 313), while an apocalypse in inner character and a prophecy in purpose, is an epistle in form. The saints are the people of holy and consecrated life both in the cities of Asia and throughout the world. The source of their excellence and the guarantee of their future is only the grace of Christ. Of this the benediction is a reminder, and a prayer that they may realize it.

PART III

THE CORRELATION OF THE INTERPRETATION

It only remains for us to correlate and summarize the results of our interpretation of this splendid book.

Leaving out the introduction (i: 1-8) and the conclusion (xxii: 6-21) we have found that the book is made up of two great visions. In the record of these we have the things that John saw and was instructed to write (i: 11, 19). Both visions are visions of the things that are and of the things that shall be, but in different ways.

The first vision is a vision of Christ in the midst of the churches. In it He is revealed in all His magnificence as among the churches to which the book is to be sent, while His messages to them reveal the closest knowledge of their several states and the keenest appreciation both of their merits and defects. These churches are, in part at least, the things that are (vs. 19) and their several fates, as revealed in these letters, also are, in part, the things that shall be.

In the second vision (iv: 1—xxii: 5) we have also an account of the things that are and the things that shall be, but of a different kind. While in the first vision attention was directed to the churches in their relation to Christ, in this vision the great theme is the state and destiny of the Church and the Roman world. There is no detailed scrutiny of the Church as in the first vision, but the Roman world is dealt with from various points of view and its essential nature clearly set forth, while the Church is considered as a whole.

The first scene in the vision is that of the throne of God who, rather than Cæsar, is shown to be supreme in the world (chapter iv). In His hand He holds the Book of Destiny which no one is able to open until Christ appears, and to Him it is entrusted (chapter v). He proceeds to open the seals one by one until all are opened. These seal-openings, we found, revealed the condition of the Roman world and the Church as it appeared to the mind of John,—the first four showing the real condition of the Empire, and the fifth that of the Church, both being the very opposite of what they appeared to be to the outward eye, the Empire suffering from various ills though seemingly prosperous, the Church robed in white and blessed of God

though apparently crushed to death. The sixth seal-opening shows the general conviction that the time of Divine judgment is at hand. Of course the first thought is of the fate of the Church in such an event. The seventh chapter shows that provision is made for her so that she will not suffer at all, being sealed against all spiritual evil and having all her needs supplied. Then the seventh seal is loosed and the Book of Destiny is fully open.

After an half-hour's silence, which adds emphasis to the coming events, the out-pourings of Divine wrath begin and continue throughout the series of the seven trumpets (viii: 2—xi: 19). These seven trumpets reveal events similar to those of the seal-openings, but they are considered from a different angle. Indeed they may be the very same events, but while there they were merely considered as facts revealing a certain condition of the Church and the Empire, here they are considered as Divinely ordered and expressing a Divine purpose—a call to repentance; but the people do not repent. Therefore the next stage is that of judgment as expressed in the seventh trumpet,—destruction for those that will not repent and reward to the saints. In all this the Church receives the Divine revelation, witnesses faithfully, and is triumphant and victorious in spite of seeming defeat and destruction (x: 1—xi: 14).

In the section xii: 1—xx: 5 the judgment of the seventh trumpet is enlarged, the different aspects of it given in detail, and the whole embellished with much color. Rome is pictured as the embodiment and expression of Satan (chapter xii), as a hideous beast (xiii: 1-10), and as a monster with extraordinary powers (xiii: 11-18), while the Church is assembled with Christ (xiv: 1-5), and announcement is made that the time of judgment is come and Rome has fallen (xiv: 6-13). This judgment includes the harvest of the world (xiv: 14-20), the pouring out of the wrath of God on the impenitent (xv: 1—xvi: 21), and consequently the passing of Rome (xvii—xviii), all of which are impressively pictured at length. The calamities of the bowls are similar to those of the seals and trumpets,—perhaps the very same phenomena are represented by them,—but their purpose is now punitive, and they are final. After the overthrow of Rome there is a great thanksgiving to God, while Christ completes the victory. The Church then advances to a higher life, and after a long period of prosperity and a final

conflict with Satan sees the final overthrow of the powers of evil (chapters xix, xx).

The vision closes with a vivid and beautiful picture of the Church in her final estate of bliss and peace with God (xxi—xxii: 5).

In the book of Revelation we have a remarkable combination of characteristics. First. It is an epistle in outward form, having at the beginning the name of the author and those to whom it is sent (i: 4); the reason for this form is also given (i: 11, xxii: 16). Second. It is an apocalypse in literary character and so describes itself (i: 1, notes). Third. In its essential nature it is a prophecy, and even claims to be such (i: 3, xxii: 7, 10, 18, 19). It has all the directness and adaptation to the distinct needs of those to whom it is written of the epistle, all the weird mystery and extraordinary scenery of the apocalypse, all the clear exposition of the Divine nature and of His will and purposes for the world of the prophecy. It is therefore admirably adapted to discharge its great purpose of inspiring the Christian communities of Asia Minor, and particularly those of them to which it was primarily sent, with hope and faith in their long period of severe persecution.

This comfort and encouragement is chiefly based on the distinct teaching of the book on four great themes, viz. God, Christ, the Roman Empire, and the Church.

I. God is the Giver of the revelation contained in the book. He is very great and magnificent, eternal, omnipotent, thrice holy, wise, glorious, true and just in His ways, and the King of saints. He is declared to be worthy to receive glory, honour, power and praise, while salvation is ascribed to Him. He is the Creator of heaven and earth and all things in them, whose works are great and marvellous, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Ruler of the nations who has taken to Himself His great power and reigns. He dispenses judgment both to the evil and the good and His judgments are true and righteous, so that all get their just deserts. He is Lord and God who shall be universally worshipped. Here is a remarkable and worthy picture of God, a picture that could not fail to inspire His suffering people in Asia Minor with courage and hope. That such an one is infinitely superior to the Roman emperor in every way, and especially as an object of worship, is self-evident.

II. Christ has a large place in the book. Indeed it is the

revelation of Him. He is the faithful and true Witness, the First-born of the dead who lives for ever and has the keys of death, Hades, and David, so that He can open and no one can shut and shut and no one can open. He is the Son of God, magnificent and eternal, holy and true, the Beginning of the creation of God, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, yet a Lamb that is the Root and Offspring of David, the bright and morning Star. His word is so keen and powerful that it is able even to kill His enemies and smite the nations. He is worthy to receive power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, and praise. Though coming in the clouds and the One whom all shall see, over Him all tribes of the earth shall mourn. He is a glorious Conqueror who is the Victor in every conflict with Satan or the Empire, who wears many diadems on His head, and in righteousness judges and makes war. He is a great Leader whom the armies of heaven follow. Though very magnificent, with His eyes like flames of fire, His countenance like the sun, and His feet like pillars of fine brass, He yet loves the Church and her people, has loosed many from sin and redeemed them by His blood from all kindreds, tribes, tongues, and peoples, making them a kingdom of rulers and priests to God who share the government of the world and the priestly service of God with Him who is the Prince of the kings of the earth and the One to whom glory and dominion forever are ascribed. He is in the midst of the churches and knows their condition and works, appreciating their virtues and disapproving their vices. He rebukes and chastens those whom He loves, assuring those who overcome of great rewards and those who fail of severe punishments. This was their Saviour, their Leader, and their King before whom all the great ones of Rome sank to insignificance.

III. Rome and her people have a large place in the book. Whether she is considered as a great city reigning over the kings of the earth and with which they have heinously sinned; or whether she is considered as an assemblage of peoples, nations, and tongues; or whether she is looked upon as a political power or a religious organization worshipping the emperor as her god; she and her peoples are consistently represented as the very opposite of what they should be according to the will of God. Ugly and monstrous to an extraordinary degree, exceedingly evil and forcing her evil character upon all the peoples under her influence, having great power, and yet the wonder of

the world and the object of its worship, she is represented as the very incarnation and instrument of Satan. She persecutes the Church, resists the gospel, fails to repent of her evils even when mercifully pressed to do so by the outpourings of Divine wrath, and continues in her iniquities until she must be overthrown by God. Yet she suffers much from various kinds of torment, such as earthquake, drought, famine, pestilence, and war. Her people are convinced that the time of Divine judgment is at hand, and their apprehensions are well founded for she is overpowered by the just judgment of God and falls in utter overthrow never to rise again. She is greatly lamented, but her smoke rises up for ever and ever. Thus is described the character and destiny of Rome. Indeed her complete destruction is already determined by God, or rather she has herself determined it by her own character and conduct. Although often in the vision spoken of as having actually occurred, her fall was still an event of the future for the Christians of John's day, though necessarily determined and assured by her character and conduct then.

IV. The Church of the day and its people also have a large place in the book. Those who hear and read the book and keep the things written in it are declared to be blessed. It is to the Church and its people that the book is sent. They are summoned to leave the iniquities of the Empire, are redeemed from the earth by the blood of Christ, are made a kingdom of servants, priests, and prophets of God and reign with Him. Though suffering temporarily they are yet sealed and guaranteed against any real spiritual injury from demons or otherwise. Though they have come out of great tribulation their bliss is great, for they are attired in white, commune with Him, and desire to know how long it will be before their blood is avenged. They praise God in His temple and sing before His throne. They keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They receive the revelation of Christ and witness for Him in the world. Even in death they are blessed. While collectively as the Church they are closely scrutinized by Christ and their shortcomings faithfully indicated, He keenly appreciates their virtues. The Church is glorious, the bride of Christ, and when assembled on Mount Zion with Him is declared to be without defect. Rome passes away but the Church triumphs and dwells in the city of God, reigns for ever and

ever, and enjoys eternal bliss with Christ her Lord. As the condition of Rome was really the reverse of what it appeared to be to the outward eye, so it is with the Church and the people of God. She is apparently persecuted, crushed, and dead; but really she is the bride of Christ, living and reigning with Him and gloriously triumphant, though it will be only in the future that her triumph will be generally manifest.

What inspiration to faith and courage such teaching as this would bring to the church of that day we can well surmise. God the supreme and glorious Emperor of the universe and not Cæsar; Jesus Christ the ever-present Saviour who was dead but always lives, the glorious Conqueror who reigns continually with His people in the world; Rome, apparently mistress of the world but even then fallen by her iniquities and doomed to utter extinction; the Church, redeemed from the world, cleansed from sin, robed in righteousness, communing with God, the bride and companion of Christ, kept from all real harm and triumphant then and at last, her people blessed even in death, though persecuted and apparently done to death in the world;—can it be doubted for a moment that such teaching as this must have exercised a powerful influence in enabling that same Church to endure hardness, be faithful even unto death, and conquer the proudest and most powerful empire the world had ever seen after a conflict lasting nearly three centuries? Without the help of this book the battle might perhaps have been won, but the church of that time would certainly have been much weaker, the fight might have been longer, and the whole Christian world then and since would have been poorer indeed.

And is not such teaching just what is needed to inspire the Church of every age to courage and faith and enable it to triumph over its foes? In every age it has its enemies to fight and its conquests to make. Is it not always weakened by defect and greatly in need of just such encouragement and help as this book brought to the Christians of the latter half of the first century? Seeing the meaning of the book in at least a general way, we are in a position to apply it in our own case. And what faithful follower of Jesus Christ but is helped by the knowledge and cheered by the assurance that God is supreme in the universe rather than Satan and sin; that Jesus Christ, though He died in apparent disgrace on Calvary, ever lives, is the world's Saviour, the sure Conqueror, and the eternal King;

that the kingdoms of evil even though they may seem to be world-wide and all-powerful, have even now fallen and are doomed to pass away; and that the people of God, though few in number, greatly despised, and continually called upon to suffer greatly in the world, are really the world's heroes, triumphant in their life and reigning with Christ. Inspired and encouraged by the great truths of this book the Church of every age will go on conquering and to conquer, strong in the knowledge that her labor is not in vain, that the Lord God omnipotent reigns, and that in His own good time the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX I

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him,
to show to his servants what must quickly come to pass;
2 and he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John, who
bore witness of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus
3 Christ, of as many things as he saw. Blessed is he that reads
and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the
things written therein, for the time is at hand.
4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia; grace
to you and peace from him who was and is and is to come, and
5 from the seven spirits which are before his throne, and from
Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead,
and the prince of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us
6 and loosed us from our sins by his blood, and made us a king-
dom, priests to God and his father, to him be the glory and
7 the dominion for ever and ever; amen. Behold he comes with
the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they who pierced
him, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even
so, amen.
8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord, the God,
who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.
9 I John, your brother and partner in the tribulation
and kingdom and patience of Jesus, was in the island called
10 Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was
in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great
11 voice as of a trumpet saying, "What you see write in a book
and send to the seven churches, unto Ephesus and unto Smyrna
and unto Pergamum and unto Thyatira and unto Sardis and
12 unto Philadelphia and unto Laodicea." And I turned to see
the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned I saw seven
13 golden lamps, and in the midst of the lamps one like a son of
man clothed with a garment down to the feet and girdled
14 around the breast with a golden girdle; his head and his hair
were white as wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a
15 flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass as if refined in a fur-
16 nace, and his voice as the voice of many waters; and he had in
his right hand seven stars, and a sharp two-edged sword pro-
ceeded from his mouth, and his face was as the sun shines in its

17 strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead; and
he laid his right hand on me saying, "Fear not; I am the first
18 and the last and the living one, and I was dead and behold I am
living for ever and ever, and I have the keys of death and
19 Hades. Write, then, the things that you saw, and the things
20 that are, and the things that shall be hereafter. The mystery
of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven
golden lamps; the seven stars are the angels of the seven
churches, and the seven lamps are the seven churches.

2 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write;

"These things says he who holds the seven stars in his right
2 hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps; I
know your works, and your labour and your patience, and that
you cannot bear evil men, and you have tried those who call
3 themselves apostles, and are not, and found them false; and you
have patience, and have borne for my name, and have not
4 grown weary. But I have against you that you have left your
5 first love. Remember then from whence you have fallen, and
repent and do the first works; but if not, I come to you and will
6 move your lamp out of its place, unless you repent. But this
you have that you hate the works of the Nicolaitanes, which I
7 also hate. He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says
to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat of
the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write;

"These things says the first and the last, who was dead and
9 lived. I know your tribulation and poverty, but you are rich,
and the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and are not,
10 but a synagogue of Satan. Fear not what you are to suffer.
Behold the devil will cast some of you into prison that you may
be tried, and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful
11 unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has
an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He
who overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write;

"These things says he who has the sharp two-edged sword.
13 I know where you dwell, where the throne of Satan is, and you
hold fast my name and did not deny my faith, even in the days
of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was slain among
14 you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you,
because you have there those who hold the teaching of Balaam,

who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children
of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornica-
15 tion. Thus you have also those who hold the teaching of the
16 Nicolaitanes likewise. Repent then; or else I come unto you
quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of
17 my mouth. He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit
says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give of the
hidden manna, and I will give to him a white stone, and upon
the stone a new name written that no one knows but he that
receives it.
18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write;
"These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes as a
19 flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass. I know your works
and your love and faith and service and patience, and that your
20 last works are more than the first. But I have against you that
you tolerate the woman Jezabel, who calls herself a prophetess,
and teaches and leads my servants to commit fornication and to
21 eat things offered to idols. And I gave her time to repent, and
22 she did not wish to repent of her fornication. Behold I cast
her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into
23 great tribulation unless they repent of her works; and her chil-
dren I will kill with death; and all the churches shall know
that I am the searcher of reins and hearts, and I will give to
24 you each according to your works. But I say to the rest of you
in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who do not
know the deep things of Satan, as they say, I cast upon you no
25 other burden. But what you have hold fast till I come. He
26 who overcomes and he who keeps my works unto the end, I
27 will give to him authority over the nations, and he shall rule
them with a rod of iron, as potter's vessels they are broken, as I
28 also received of my Father, and I will give to him the morning
29 star. He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to
the churches.
3 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write;
"These things says he who has the seven spirits of God and
the seven stars. I know your works, that you have a name that
2 you live, and you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the
things that remain which are ready to die, for I have not found
3 your works completed before my God; remember then how you
have received and heard, and keep and repent; if therefore you
shall not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall not know

what hour I will come upon you. But you have a few names
in Sardis that did not defile their garments, and they shall walk
with me in white, for they are worthy. He who thus overcomes
shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not at all blot
out his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name
before my father and before his angels. He who has an ear let
him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write;

"These things says he that is holy, he that is true, he that has
the key of David, he that opens and no one shall shut, and shuts
and no one opens. I know your works; behold I have set be-
fore you a door opened, which no one is able to shut; because
you have a little strength, and you have kept my word, and
have not denied my name. Behold I give of the synagogue of
Satan, of those who call themselves Jews, and are not but speak
falsely; behold I will make them come and worship before your
feet, and they shall know that I loved you. Because you kept
the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour
of trial which will come upon the whole world, to try those
who dwell upon the earth. I come quickly; hold fast what you
have that no one take your crown. He who overcomes, I will
make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out
no more at all; and I will write upon him the name of my God
and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which
comes down out of the heaven from my God, and my new name.
He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the
churches.

"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write;

"These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness,
the beginning of the creation of God. I know your works, that
you are neither cold nor hot. I would you were cold or hot.
So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will
spew you out of my mouth. Because you say 'I am rich and
have increased in goods and have need of nothing,' and do not
know that you are the afflicted one and miserable and poor and
blind and naked, I counsel you to buy of me gold refined from
the fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may
clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness be not manifest,
and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see. I rebuke
and chasten as many as I love; be zealous then and repent. Be-
hold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hear my voice

and open the door, I will come in to him and I will sup with
21 him and he with me. He who overcomes, I will give to him to
sit with me in my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with
22 my father in his throne. He who has an ear let him hear what
the Spirit says to the churches."

4 After these things I saw and behold a door opened in
the heaven, and the first voice which I heard was like that of
a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Ascend hither, and I will
2 show you what must come to pass hereafter." Immediately I
was in the spirit; and behold there was a throne in the heaven,
3 and one sitting upon the throne, and he that sat was like in ap-
pearance to a jasper and sardine stone, and a rainbow round the
4 throne was like an emerald in appearance. And round the
throne were twenty-four thrones, and upon the thrones twenty-
four elders sat clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on
5 their heads. And out of the throne lightnings and voices and
thunders proceed; and seven lamps of fire were burning be-
6 fore the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. And be-
fore the throne as it were a glassy sea like crystal. And in the
midst of the throne and round about the throne were four liv-
7 ing creatures full of eyes before and behind; the first creature
was like a lion, and the second creature was like a calf, and the
third creature had the face of a man, and the fourth creature
8 was like a flying eagle; and the four living creatures had each
six wings, while round about and within they were full of eyes;
and day and night they have no rest saying,

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, the God, the Almighty,
who was and is and is to come."

9 And whenever the living creatures shall give glory and
honour and thanks to him who sits upon the throne, who lives
10 for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders shall fall down before
the throne and shall worship him who lives for ever and ever,
and cast their crowns before the throne saying,

11 "Thou art worthy, our Lord and our God, to receive
the glory and the honour and the power, for thou hast cre-
ated all things, and for thy pleasure they exist and were
created."

5 And I saw upon the right hand of him that sat upon
the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed
2 with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with
a great voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to loose its

seals?" And no one in the heaven nor upon the earth nor under
the earth was able to open the book or to look on it. And I
wept much because no one was found worthy to open the book
or to look on it; and one of the elders says to me, "Weep not;
behold the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David,
has overcome to open the book and its seven seals." And I
saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures,
and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been
slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven
spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and
took it out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne.
And when he took the book, the four living creatures and the
twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, having each a harp and
golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints;
and they sing a new song saying,

"Thou art worthy to take the book and to open its
seals, because thou wast slain and hast bought to God by
thy blood from every tribe and tongue and people and na-
tion, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our
God, and they reign on the earth."

And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels in the
circle of the throne and of the living creatures and of the
elders, and the number of them was myriads of myriads and
thousands of thousands, saying with a great voice,

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power
and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory
and praise."

And every creature in the heaven and upon the earth and un-
der the earth and on the sea and all in them, I heard saying,

"To him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be
the praise and the honour and the glory and the dominion
for ever and ever."

And the four living creatures said "Amen," and the elders fell
down and worshipped.

6 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven
seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with
a voice of thunder, "Come." And I saw, and behold a white
horse, and he that sat upon him had a bow, and a crown was
given to him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer.
And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living
creature saying, "Come." And another horse, blood-red, went

forth, and to the one sitting on him it was given to take peace
from the earth and that they should slay one another, and a
5 great sword was given to him. And when he opened the third
seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." And
I saw, and behold a black horse, and he that sat upon him had
6 a weigh-beam in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice in the
midst of the four living creatures saying, "A measure of wheat
for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and the
7 oil and the wine injure not." And when he opened the fourth
seal, I heard a voice of the fourth living creature saying,
8 "Come." And I saw, and behold a pale horse, and the one
sitting on him had Death for his name, and Hades followed
with him, and authority was given to them over the fourth of
the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with
9 death and by the wild beasts of the earth. And when he opened
the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those slain
10 for the word of God and for the witness which they had. And
they called out with a great voice saying, "How long, O Lord
holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on
11 those that dwell on the earth?" And a white robe was given
to each one of them, and it was said to them that they should
rest yet a little time until their fellow-servants and their
brethren who were to be killed as they also were, should be com-
12 pleted. And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there
was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth
13 of hair, and the moon altogether became as blood, and the stars
of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree casts her unripe figs when
14 shaken by a great wind, and the heaven was removed as a scroll
rolled up, and every mountain and island were removed from
15 their places. And the kings of the earth and the magnates and
the chief captains and the rich and the strong and every slave
and free man hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the
16 mountains, and they say to the mountains and to the rocks,
"Fall upon us and hide us from the face of him that sits upon
17 the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great
day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

7 After this I saw four angels standing on the four
corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that
no wind should blow on the earth nor on the sea nor on any
2 tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the sun-rising,
having the seal of the living God, and he called with a great

voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth
3 and the sea, saying, "Hurt not the earth nor the sea nor the
trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their
4 foreheads." And I heard the number of the sealed, one hun-
dred and forty-four thousand, sealed from every tribe of the
children of Israel;
5 Of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed,
Of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand,
Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand,
6 Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand,
Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand,
Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand,
7 Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand,
Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand,
Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand,
8 Of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand,
Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand,
Of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.
9 After these things I saw, and behold a great crowd,
which no one could number, of every nation and all tribes and
peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the
10 Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and
they call out with a great voice, saying,
"Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne and to
the Lamb."
11 And all the angels stood around the throne and the eld-
ers and the four living creatures, and fell before the throne
12 on their faces and worshipped God, saying,
"Amen; the praise and the glory and the wisdom and the
thanksgiving and the honour and the power and the
strength be unto our God for ever and ever; amen."
13 And one of the elders answered me saying, "Who are
these clothed in the white robes and whence came they?"
14 And I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me,
"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and
they washed their robes and made them white with the blood
15 of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God,
and they serve him day and night in his temple, and he who sits
16 upon the throne will spread his tabernacle over them. They
shall hunger no more nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun
17 fall on them nor any heat. for the Lamb in the midst of the

throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to fountains of waters of life; and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."

8 And when he opened the seventh seal, there was silence
2 in the heaven about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given
3 them. And another angel came and stood at the altar having a golden censer, and much incense was given him to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which is before
4 the throne. And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascended before God from the hand of the angel.
5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth; and there were thunders and
6 voices and lightnings and an earthquake. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.
7 And the first sounded; and there was hail and fire mingled with blood, and it was cast into the earth; and the third of the earth was burned up, and the third of trees was
8 burned up, and all green grass was burned up. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third of the sea became blood,
9 and the third of the creatures in the sea died,—those having life,
10 and the third of the boats were wrecked. And the third angel sounded; and a great star burning as a torch fell from the heaven, and it fell upon the third of the rivers and upon the
11 fountains of the waters. And the name of the star is Wormwood. And the third 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 of the sun was smitten and the third of the moon and the third of the stars, so that the third of them should be darkened and the day should not shine for a third of it, and the night likewise.
13 And I saw, and I heard one eagle flying in mid-heaven and saying with a great voice, "Woe, woe, woe for those dwelling on the earth from the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels yet to sound."

9 And the fifth angel sounded; and I saw a star from the heaven fallen into the earth, and the key of the abysmal pit
2 was given him; and he opened the abysmal pit, and a smoke ascended from the pit as the smoke of a great furnace, and the
3 sun and the air were darkened from the smoke of the pit. And

locusts went forth out of the smoke to the earth, and power was
4 given them as the scorpions of the earth have power. And
they were told not to hurt the grass of the earth nor anything
green nor any tree, but only the men who had not the seal of
5 God on their forehead. And it was given them that they should
not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months;
and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when it
6 strikes a man. And in those days men shall seek death and shall
not find it at all, and they shall desire to die and death flees
7 from them. And the likenesses of the locusts were similar to
horses prepared for war, and upon their heads as it were crowns
8 as of gold, and their faces were as the faces of men, and they
had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the
9 teeth of lions, and they had breastplates like breastplates of
iron, and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots
10 of many horses rushing to war; and they have tails like scorpions
and stings, and in their tails is their power to hurt men five
11 months. They have over them as king the angel of the abyss;
his name in the Hebrew is Abaddon and in the Greek he has
12 Apollyon as name. One woe has come: behold there come yet
two more woes.

13 And the sixth angel sounded; and I heard one voice
14 from the horns of the golden altar before God, saying to the
sixth angel that had the trumpet, "Loose the four angels bound
15 at the great river Euphrates." And the four angels who had
been prepared for the hour and day and month and year were
16 loosed, to kill the third of men. And the number of the armies
of the horsemen was two myriads of myriads; I heard their
17 number. And thus I saw the horses in the vision and those
sitting on them, having breastplates fiery and hyacinthine and
sulphurous; and the heads of the horses were as the heads of
lions, and out of their mouths fire and smoke and sulphur pro-
18 ceed. By these three plagues the third of men was slain, by
the fire and the smoke and the sulphur proceeding out of their
19 mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouth and in
their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads, and
20 with them they hurt. And the rest of the men, who were not
killed by these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands,
that they should not worship the demons and the images of gold
and silver and brass and stone and wood, which can neither see
21 nor hear nor walk, and they repented not of their murders nor

of their sorceries nor of their fornication nor of their thefts.
10 And I saw another strong angel descending from the
heaven, clothed with a cloud, and the rainbow on his head,
2 and his face as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, and hav-
ing in his hand a little book opened up. And he set his right
3 foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth, and cried out with
a great voice as a lion roars. And when he cried out, the seven
4 thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders
spake, I was about to write. And I heard a voice out of the
heaven saying, "Seal up the things that the seven thunders
5 spake, and write them not." And the angel whom I saw stand-
ing upon the sea and upon the earth, raised his right hand unto
6 the heaven, and sware by him who lives forever and ever, who
created the heaven and the things in it and the earth and the
things in it and the sea and the things in it, that there should
7 be no longer delay; but in the days of the voice of the seventh
angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God is finished,
as he announced the glad tidings to his servants the prophets.
8 And the voice which I heard out of the heaven, again spake
with me and said, "Go take the book which is open in the hand
9 of the angel standing on the sea and on the earth." And I went
to the angel telling him to give me the little book. And he
says to me, "Take it and eat it up, and it will make your belly
10 bitter, but in your mouth it shall be sweet as honey." And I
took the little book from the hand of the angel and ate it up,
and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and when I ate it, my
11 belly was made bitter. And they say unto me, "You must
prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and
tongues and kings."
11 And a reed like a rod was given me, with the words,
"Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and the
2 worshippers in it. And the court outside the temple leave out
and measure it not, because it has been given to the nations, and
3 the holy city shall they tread down forty-two months. And
I will give to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thou-
4 sand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." These
are the two olive trees and the two lamps standing before the
5 Lord of the earth. And if anyone will hurt them, fire proceeds
from their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone
6 would hurt them, thus he must be killed. These have the au-
thority to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of

their prophecy, and they have authority over the waters to turn
them to blood and to smite the earth with every plague as often
7 as they shall wish. And when they have completed their wit-
ness, the beast that ascends from the abyss shall make war with
8 them and overcome them and kill them. And their dead body
shall be upon the street of the great city, which spiritually is
called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.
9 And those of the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations
look upon their dead body three days and a half, and permit
10 not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those dwelling
on the earth rejoice over them and make merry, and shall send
gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those
11 who dwell on the earth. And after the three days and a half
breath of life from God entered in them, and they stood upon
12 their feet, and great fear fell upon those who saw them. And
they heard a great voice from the heaven saying to them, "As-
cend here," and they ascended to the heaven in the cloud, and
13 their enemies saw them. And in that hour there was a great
earthquake, and the tenth of the city fell, and in the earthquake
seven thousand men were slain, and the rest were terrified and
14 gave glory to the God of the heaven. The second woe has
come; behold the third woe comes quickly.

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great
voices in the heaven, saying,

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of
our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever
and ever."

16 And the twenty-four elders that were sitting before God on
17 their thrones fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying,

"We thank thee, O Lord, God, the Almighty, who is
and who was, because thou hast taken thy great power and
18 hast reigned; and the nations were angry, and thy wrath is
come and the time of the dead to be judged, and to give the
reward to thy servants the prophets and to the saints and
to those who fear thy name, the small and the great, and to
destroy those who destroy the earth."

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

12 And a great sign was seen in the heaven, a woman

clothed with the sun, and the moon beneath her feet, and on her
2 head a crown of twelve stars, and being with child she cried
3 out in travail and pain to bring forth. And another sign was
seen in the heaven, and behold a great blood-red dragoon, having
seven heads and ten horns and upon his heads seven diadems,
4 and his tail draws the third of the stars of the heaven and did
cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman
about to bring forth, to devour her child when she should bring
5 it forth. And she brought forth a son, a male child, who is
to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was
6 caught up to God and to his throne. And the woman fled to
the desert where she has a place prepared of God, that they
may there nourish her a thousand two hundred and sixty days.
7 And there was war in the heaven, Michael and his angels
fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels,
8 and prevailed not, nor was their place found any more in the
9 heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, the old serpent,
called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world;
he was cast into the earth and his angels were cast down with
10 him. And I heard a great voice in the heaven saying,

"Now there is the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them be-
11 fore our God day and night; and they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their witness, and they loved not their life unto death.
12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them; woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has a little time."

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast into the earth,
he pursued the woman who brought forth the male child.
14 And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman,
to fly to the desert to 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 after the woman water
16 as a river, to carry her away in the stream. And the earth
helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank
17 down the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth; and
the dragon was angry at the woman, and went to make war
with the rest of her seed that keep the commands of God and

18 have the witness of Jesus. And he stood upon the sand of the
sea.
13 And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having
ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and
2 on his heads names of blasphemy. And the beast that I saw
was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and
his mouth as a mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his
3 power and his throne and great authority. And I saw one of
his heads as if it had been wounded unto death, and his death
stroke was healed. And the whole earth wondered after the
4 beast, and they worshipped the dragon because he gave the
authority unto the beast, and they worshipped the beast say-
5 ing, "Who is like the beast, and who can war with him?" And
there was given him a mouth speaking great things and blas-
phemies, and there was given him authority to continue forty-
6 two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against
God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, even those
7 dwelling in the heaven. And it was given him to make war
with the saints and to overcome them, and authority was given
8 him over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And
all who dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose
name is not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from
9 the foundation of the world. If any one has an ear let him
10 hear. If any one shall lead into captivity, into captivity he goes;
if anyone shall slay with the sword, he must be slain with the
sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.
11 And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth,
and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a
12 dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in
his presence. And he makes the earth and those dwelling in it
13 worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed. And
he does great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out
14 of the heaven to the earth before men. And he deceives those
who dwell on the earth by means of the signs which it is given
him to do before the beast, saying to those dwelling on the
earth that they should make an image to the beast that had the
15 wound of the sword and lived. And it was given him to give
breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast
should both speak and act so that as many as would not worship
16 the image of the beast should be killed. And he makes all,
the small and the great, both the rich and the poor, both the

free and the bond, receive a mark on their right hand or their
17 forehead, and that no one could buy or sell but he who has the
18 mark, the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding count the number of the beast, for it is a number of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

14 And I saw, and behold the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty-four thousand having his name and the name of his father written on
2 their foreheads. And I heard a voice from the heaven like the voice of many waters and like the voice of great thunder, and the voice that I heard was like that of harpers harping with
3 their harps. And they sing as it were a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song but the hundred and forty-four
4 thousand, who were bought from the earth. These are those who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these were bought from
5 men to be a first fruit to God and to the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found; they are faultless.

6 And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal gospel to proclaim to those dwelling on the earth
7 and to every race and tribe and tongue and people, saying with a great voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment is come, and worship him who made the heaven
8 and the earth and sea and fountains of waters." And another, a second angel, followed saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, that made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of
9 her harlotry." And another angel, a third, followed them saying with a great voice, "If any one worship the beast and his
10 image, and receive a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God poured out undiluted in the cup of his anger, and shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the
11 presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends for ever and ever, and they have no rest day and night, who worship the beast and his image, and anyone who may receive
12 the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints, who
13 keep the commands of God and the faith of Jesus." And I heard a voice from the heaven saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now. Yea, says the Spirit, to

rest from their labours, for their works go with them.' "
14 And I saw, and behold a white cloud, and upon the
cloud one sitting like a son of man, having on his head a golden
15 crown and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came
out of the temple, calling with a great voice to him who sat on
the cloud, "Send forth your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap
16 is come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." And he that
sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth, and the earth
17 was reaped. And another angel went out of the temple in the
18 heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel went
out from the altar, he having authority over the fire, and called
out with a great voice to the one that had the sharp sickle say-
ing, "Send forth your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of
19 the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." And the
angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the
earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.
20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came
out of the winepress unto the bridles of the horses for one
thousand six hundred furlongs.

15 And I saw another sign in the heaven, great and mar-
vellous, seven angels having seven plagues, which are the
2 last, for in them the wrath of God is completed. And I saw
as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who come
victorious from the beast and from his image and from the
number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having the
3 harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of
God and the song of the Lamb, saying,

"Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord, God, the
Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of the na-
4 tions; who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name?
for thou alone art holy; for all the nations shall come and
worship before thee, for thy righteous acts are made mani-
fest."

5 And after these things I saw, and the temple of the
6 tent of the witness was opened in the heaven, and the seven
angels having the seven plagues came out of the temple clothed
with linen, pure and bright, and girdled about their breasts with
7 golden girdles. And one of the four living creatures gave to
the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God
8 who lives for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with
smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one

was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were complete.

16 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the seven bowls of the
2 wrath of God into the earth." And the first went and poured out his bowl into the earth; and a noisome and grievous sore fell upon the men who had the mark of the beast and who
3 worshipped his image. And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became blood as of a dead man, and every
4 living soul died,—those in the sea. And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters; and
5 they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous art thou, who art and wast, thou Holy One, be-
6 cause thou hast judged thus; for they have shed blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; they
7 are worthy." And I heard the altar saying, "Yea, Lord, God,
8 the Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments." And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given to
9 him to scorch the men with fire, and the men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has the authority over these plagues, and they repented not to
10 give him glory. And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom became darkened, and they
11 gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of the heaven because of their pains, and their sores, and repented not
12 of their works. And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way
13 of the kings from the sunrising should be prepared. 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
14 mouth of the false prophet; for they are the spirits of demons doing signs, which go forth to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them to the war of the great day of God the Al-
15 mighty. (Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his
16 shame). And they gathered them to the place called in Hebrew
17 Har Magedon. And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there went forth a great voice out of the temple from
18 the throne saying, "It is done." And there were lightnings and voices and thunders, and a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men on the earth,—an earthquake so very great.

19 And the great city was broken into three parts, and the cities
of the nations fell; and Babylon the great was remembered be-
fore God to give to her the cup of the wine of the wrath of
20 his anger; and every island fled away, and mountains were not
21 found. And a great hail with stones like talents for weight,
fell out of the heaven on the men; and the men blasphemed God
for the plague of the hail, for the plague of it is very great.
17 And one of the seven angels having the seven bowls, came
and spake with me saying, "Come hither, I will show you
2 the judgment of the great harlot that sits on many waters, with
whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and those
dwelling on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her
3 fornication." And he bore me away in spirit into a wilderness.
And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet colored beast, full of
4 names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns; and
the woman was clothed with purple and scarlet, and decked
with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup
in her hand full of abominations and the unclean things of her
5 fornication, and upon her forehead a name written, "MYS-
TERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF
THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF
6 THE EARTH." And I saw the woman drunken with the
blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.
7 And when I saw her I wondered with great wonder; and the
angel said to me, "Why did you wonder? I will tell you the
mystery of the woman and of the beast carrying her, that has
8 the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that you saw
was and is not, and is about to ascend out of the abyss and to go
into perdition; and these dwelling on the earth shall wonder,
the name of whom has not been written in the book of life from
the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was
9 and is not and shall be present. Here is the mind that has
wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the
10 woman sits. And there are seven kings; the five have fallen,
the one is, the other is not yet come, and when he comes he
11 must remain a little time. And the beast that was and is not, is
himself also an eighth and is of the seven, and goes into perdi-
12 tion. And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who
have received no kingdom yet, but receive authority as kings one
13 hour with the beast. These have one mind, and give their
14 power and authority to the beast. These shall war with the

Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, because he is Lord
of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and
15 chosen and faithful." And he says to me, "The waters which
you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and
16 nations and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw and
the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and make her desolate and
17 naked, and devour her flesh, and burn her up with fire; for God
put into their hearts to do his mind, and to come to one mind
and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God
18 shall be fulfilled. And the woman that you saw is the great
city which has dominion over the kings of the earth."

18 After these things I saw another angel coming down
out of the heaven having great authority, and the earth was
2 lightened with his glory. And he called with a powerful voice
saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a
dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit
3 and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird; for by the
wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen,
and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and
the merchants of the earth grew rich by the power of her
4 luxury." And I heard another voice out of the heaven saying,
"Come forth, my people, out of her, that you have no fellow-
5 ship with her sins, and receive not of her plagues; for her sins
have reached unto the heaven, and God has remembered her
6 iniquities. Give to her as also she gave and double the doubles
according to her works; in the cup which she mingled mingle to
7 her double; as much as she glorified herself and grew luxurious,
so much torment and grief give her. Because in her heart she
says, 'I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no grief.'
8 Therefore in one day her plagues shall come, death and grief
and famine, and she shall be burned up with fire; for strong is
9 the Lord God who judges her. And the kings of the earth that
committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her shall
weep and lament, when they see the smoke of her burning,
10 standing far away for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas,
the great city, Babylon, the strong city, for in one hour is your
11 judgment come.' And the merchants of the earth weep and
mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise any more,
12 merchandise of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls
and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and all thyine
wood and every vessel of ivory and every vessel of most precious

13 wood and of brass and iron and marble, and cinnamon and
amomum and incense and ointment and frankincense and wine
and oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and
merchandise of horses and chariots and slaves, and souls of men.
14 And the fruits which your soul desired are gone from you, and
all dainty and sumptuous things are perished from you, and they
15 shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things,
who grew rich by her, shall stand far off for the fear of her tor-
16 ment weeping and mourning, saying, 'Alas, alas, the great city,
attired in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with
gold and precious stone and pearl, for in one hour so great
17 wealth is made desolate.' And every ship-master and every one
who sails any place, both sailors and such as toil on sea, stood
18 far off and called out as they saw the smoke of her burning
19 saying, 'What city is like the great city?' And they cast dust
upon their heads and called out as they wept and grieved, say-
ing, 'Alas, alas, the great city, in which all who had boats on
the sea became rich out of her costliness, for in one hour is she
20 made desolate.' Rejoice over her, O heaven, and the saints and
the apostles and the prophets, for God has judged your judg-
21 ment on her." And one strong angel took up a stone like a
great millstone, and cast it into the sea saying, "Thus with
impulse shall the great city Babylon be cast down, and shall
22 be found no more at all." And a voice of harpers and minstrels
and flute-players and trumpeteers shall be heard no more in
you at all, and every craftsman of whatever craft shall be
found no more in you at all, and a sound of a millstone shall
23 be heard no more in you at all, and a light of a lamp shall shine
no more in you at all, and a voice of a bridegroom and of a bride
shall be heard no more in you at all; for your merchants were
the magnates of the earth, for with your sorcery all the nations
24 were deceived. And in her was found blood of prophets and
of saints and of all those that had been slain on the earth.

19 After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a vast
multitude in the heaven saying,

"Hallelujah; the salvation and the glory and the power
2 are our God's, for true and righteous are his judgments;
for he has judged the great harlot that corrupted the earth
with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of his
servants at her hand."

3 And again they said "Hallelujah;" and her smoke ascends

4 for ever and ever. And the twenty-four elders and the four
living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sits upon
5 the throne saying, "Amen, Hallelujah." And a voice went
forth from the throne saying,

"Praise our God, all you his servants and you who fear
him, the small and the great."

6 And I heard as it were a voice of a great multitude and
as a voice of many waters and as a voice of mighty thun-
ders, saying,

"Hallelujah, for the Lord, our God, the Almighty,
7 reigns. Let us rejoice and be very glad, and let us give the
glory to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his
8 wife has made herself ready; and it was given her to be at-
tired in fine linen bright and pure, for the fine linen is the
righteous acts of the saints."

9 And he says to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are
bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he says
10 to me, "These are true words of God." And I fell before his
feet to worship him. And he says to me, "See you do it not;
I am a fellow-servant of you and your brethren who have the
testimony of Jesus; worship God; for the testimony of Jesus
is the spirit of prophecy."

11 And I saw the heaven opened, and behold a white
horse, and he that sat on him was called faithful and true,
12 and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are as
a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, he has a
13 name written that no one knows but he himself, and he is
clothed with a garment spattered with blood, and his name is
14 called "The Word of God." And the armies which are in the
heaven followed him on white horses, dressed in fine linen
15 white and pure. And a sharp sword proceeds from his mouth,
that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them
with a rod of iron; and he treads the winepress of the fury of
16 the wrath of God the Almighty. And he has on his garment
and on his thigh a name written, "KING OF KINGS AND
LORD OF LORDS."

17 And I saw one angel standing in the sun, and he called
with a great voice saying to all the birds flying in mid-
18 heaven, "Come, be assembled to the great supper of God, that
ye may eat flesh of kings and flesh of chief captains and flesh of
strong men and flesh of horses and those sitting on them, and

19 flesh of all both free men and slaves both small and great." And
I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies
gathered to make war with him who sat upon the horse and with
20 his army. And the beast was captured and with him the false
prophet that did the signs in his presence, by which he de-
ceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who
worshipped his image; they were both cast alive into the lake
21 of fire burning with sulphur. And the rest were slain by the
sword of him who sat on the horse, the sword that proceeds out
of his mouth, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

20 And I saw an angel descending out of the heaven, having
2 the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And
he laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil
3 and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him
into the abyss, and shut and sealed it over him, that he should
deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were
4 finished; after that he must be loosed for a little time. And I
saw thrones and their occupants, and judgment was given them;
and I saw the souls of those that had been beheaded for the
testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who
did not worship the beast nor his image and did not receive the
mark on their forehead and their hand; and they lived and
5 reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead
did not live till the thousand years should be finished. This is
6 the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in
the first resurrection; on these the second death has no power,
but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign
7 with him the thousand years. And when the thousand years
8 are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall
go forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners
of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the
9 war, the number of them being as the sand of the sea. And
they went up over the breadth of the earth, and encircled the
camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire descended
10 out of the heaven and devoured them; and the devil that de-
ceived them was cast into the lake of fire and sulphur, where
both the beast and the false prophet are, and they shall be tor-
mented day and night for ever and ever.

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 no
12 place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and

the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened;
and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the
dead were judged out of the things written in the books accord-
13 ing to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in
it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them,
14 and they were judged each one according to their works. And
death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the
15 second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone was not found
written in the book of life he was cast into the lake of fire.

21 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first
heaven and the first earth were gone, and the sea is no more.
2 And I saw the holy city new Jerusalem coming down out of the
heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
3 And I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold the
tabernacle of God is with men and he shall dwell with them,
and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with
4 them, and shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and
death shall be no more; neither shall there be grief nor crying
5 nor pain any more. The first things have passed away." And
he who sits upon the throne said, "Behold I make all things
new." And he says "Write, for these words are faithful and
6 true." And he said to me, "They are accomplished. I am the
Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the
thirsty one I will give gratuitously of the fountain of the water
7 of life. He that overcomes shall inherit these things, and I
8 will be God to him and he shall be son to me. But for the
fearful and unfaithful and abominable and murderers and forni-
cators and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars their part shall be
in the lake burning with fire and sulphur, which is the second
death."

9 And one of the seven angels having the seven bowls full
of the seven last plagues came and spake with me saying,
"Come hither, I will show you the bride the wife of the Lamb."
10 And he bore me away in spirit to a mountain great and high,
and he showed me the holy city Jerusalem descending out of
11 the heaven from God, having the glory of God; her light was
like a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone
12 clear as crystal; having a wall great and high, having
twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names in-
scribed on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of
13 the children of Israel; on the east three gates, on the north three

14 gates, on the south three gates, on the west three gates; and the
wall of the city had twelve foundations, and upon them twelve
15 names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that spoke
with me had a golden reed for a measure, to measure the city
16 and its gates and its wall. And the city lies four-square, and
the length of it is as great as the breadth. And he measured
the city with the reed twelve thousand furlongs; the length and
17 the breadth and height of it are equal. And he measured the
wall of it an hundred and forty-four cubits, man's measure,
18 which is angel's. And the material of its wall was jasper, and
19 the city was pure gold like pure glass; the foundations of the
wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone; the
first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third
20 chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth
sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topas,
the tenth chrysophrase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth
21 amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one
of the several gates was of one pearl; and the street of the
22 city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw
no temple in it for the Lord, God, the Almighty, and the Lamb,
23 are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun nor of the
moon to shine on it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its
24 lamp is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light; and
25 the kings of the earth bring their glory into it; and its gates
shall not be closed at all by day, for there shall be no night
26 there; and they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations
27 into it. And there shall not at all enter it anything
common, nor he who makes an abomination and a lie,
but those who are written in the book of life of the Lamb.
22 And he showed me a river of water of life bright as
crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.
2 Between the street of it and the river, on this side and on that,
there was the tree of life bearing twelve fruits, yielding its
fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the heal-
3 ing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse. And the
throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants
4 shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall
5 be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more, and they
have no need of light of lamp and light of sun, because the Lord
God shall shine on them, and they shall reign for ever and ever.
6 And he said to me, "These words are faithful and

true, and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show to his servants the things that must
7 shortly come to pass; and behold I come quickly; blessed is he
8 who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." And I John am the one that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the
9 angel that showed me these things. And he says to me, "See you do it not; I am a fellow-servant of you and of your brethren the prophets and of those who keep the words of this
10 book; worship God." And he says to me, "Seal not the words
11 of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. Let the wrong-doer do wrong still, let the filthy be made filthy still, let the righteous do righteousness still, and let the holy be made
12 holy still. Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me,
13 to give to each one as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.
14 Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the
15 city. Without are the dogs and the sorcerers and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters and every one that loves and makes a lie."

16 "I Jesus have sent my angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star."

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come;" and let him that hears say, "Come;" and let him that is thirsty come, the one that will let him take the water of life gratuitously.

18 I testify to everyone that hears the words of the prophecy of this book; if any one shall add to them, God shall
19 add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if any one shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

20 He who testifies these things says, "Yea; I come quickly." Amen; come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints.

APPENDIX II

EXPLANATIONS

A few technical and other terms and names used in the body of this book are here explained for the benefit of such readers as may not be familiar with them.

Antinomian.—Contrary to the moral law as received and held at the time.

Bede or Beda.—The Venerable Bede, an English monk (673—735) who wrote an *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* and other works.

Clement.—In Church History usually either, (a) Clement of Rome, (bishop of Rome 92—100), who wrote several epistles, or (b) Clement of Alexandria, a Christian writer who lived about 150—220 A. D.

Didache.—A book called *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,* the oldest church manual, written about 112 A. D.

Eusebius,—Bishop of Cæsarea, wrote an important history of the Christian Church about 325 A. D.

Gnostic.—Connected with the Gnostics or Gnosticism, a philosophical early Christian sect.

Heptad.—A group of seven.

Hippolytus.—A Christian writer of Rome in the early part of the third century.

Ignatius.—A Christian writer born in Syria 67 A. D. and martyred in Rome 107 A. D.

Irenaeus.—A Greek Christian writer who died as a martyr 262 A. D.

Lex talionis.—The law of retaliation.

Nero redivivus.—Nero returned to life.

Primasius.—A Catholic bishop of Hadrumetum in northern Africa who wrote a work on the Revelation of John in the early part of the sixth century.

Propontis.—The ancient name of the sea of Marmora.

Pseudonymous.—Issued under an assumed or false name.

Stadium.—(a) A Greek measure of length of 600 Greek or 606¾ English feet. (b) A race course, the one at Olympia being exactly this length.

Strabo.—A Greek historian and geographer who lived about the time of Christ.

Sub specie aeternitatis.—Under the vision of eternity; as seen by God; considered absolutely.

Tertullian.—A Latin Christian writer of the second and third centuries.

Tetragrammaton.—The four consonantal letters יהוה of the Hebrew word Jehovah.

Victorinus.—Bishop of Pettau in Panonia, now in the southwest of Austria, in the fourth century who wrote commentaries on books of the Bible.

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