

THE GREAT DAY OF THE LORD

A SURVEY OF
NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING
ON CHRIST'S COMING IN HIS KINGDOM,
THE RESURRECTION, AND
THE JUDGEMENT OF THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

*Dies irae, dies illa
Solvat Saeculum in favilla
Tese David cum Sibylla*

BY THE REV.
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PREFACE.

IT is greatly to be desired that Christian scholars and — divines should thoroughly re-consider that interesting field of doctrine known as **"Eschatology."** Current opinions on **"Last Things"** are widely and increasingly felt to be dependent upon a highly artificial system of interpretation, and even then are marred by **evident inconsistencies**, and scarred by **visible self-contradictions**. The practical results, besides, have been deplorably unwholesome to Christian life, making it unduly sectarian, feverish, and materialistic, as well as damaging to the claims of Scripture as an authentic record of the teachings of our Lord and His Apostles.

This book is a humble plea with all who are concerned with Scripture interpretation to re-consider the whole question of the Coming and Kingdom of Christ. It proceeds upon the principle that prophecy is not couched in occult or deceptive language, though strongly Hebraistic in conception and expression, and aims at showing that **what Christ and His Apostles foretold was strictly true** when their language is interpreted in its direct sense, and in remembrance of the spiritual ends they had in view. The substantial accuracy of our conclusions may almost be presumed from the fact that New Testament prophecy is found self-consistent and easy of interpretation, and the outcome entirely worthy of the Gospel of God's salvation.

Our method is by the necessities of the case strictly exegetical, and we extend to each book a separate, though sometimes brief examination. We give the first and most prominent place to the Apocalypse for diverse reasons. It is the one New Testament book which is professedly concerned with the Second Advent, and is constructed pictorially to answer to the Biblical phrase which is the title of this work — its evening and morning prophecies together making up that epoch of judgement known to the closing centuries of the Jewish dispensation as **"The Great Day of the Lord."** In keeping with this design, it is not only the fullest Scripture dealing with our subject but at the same time the simplest; because, in spite of its allegorical scenes and Cabbalistic hints, it is the richest in detail as to the time, the nature, and the sphere of our Lord's Coming in His Kingdom. The other books of the New Testament are accordingly treated as subsidiary and corroborative, the only further light found in them being what St. Paul teaches as to the origin and development of the resurrection body. The one drawback of our method is that it leads to a repetition of texts and of ideas; but on the other hand,

such repetition may the better drive home the unfamiliar teachings of this work, and the more forcibly exhibit the perfect agreement which exists between all the New Testament books as to the facts of our Lord's Second Coming.

We have not thought it needful to discuss the authorship, date, and structure of *our piece de resistance*, the Apocalypse. The exigencies of the case do not tie us to any particular opinion. The book might have been written in part as a theological explanation of events already past, or in anticipation of events about to come. However, the evidence for **the latest date** consistent with the authorship of St. John **is so scant, and dubious at the best**, while the **internal evidence for the earlier date is so exceedingly strong** and so clearly supported by traditions almost equal in authority and more than equal in probability to those which support the first; that we cannot refuse our belief to the earlier date fixed for its origin. In any case, what we find to be the only possible interpretation of the book is in itself a strong presumption of its early and apostolic origin.

Our readers will probably not find fault with us for endeavouring, not merely to elucidate the prophetic sense of Scripture, but to accompany it with those lessons of life and godliness with which true prophecy is always charged. As New Testament prophecy is here interpreted it will be seen that its message is an essential portion of the Gospel of our salvation, and lends itself easily to didactic purposes. The first edition of this book was published four years ago, and was received with a favour for which we return our sincerest thanks. This edition adds to the first a more careful examination of the other New Testament books than could be given when these were only cursorily cited to point out their agreement with certain teachings in the Apocalypse.

It is hoped that this enlargement will make the volume increasingly useful; and certainly, the eschatological parts of the Gospels and Epistles are as commonly misunderstood as the so-called mysterious Apocalypse itself. In conclusion, we would in all sincerity assure any readers whose minds may be pre-occupied with the more sensational doctrines now popular that, on calm consideration, they will find the views here presented not only more distinctly scriptural, but more helpful to Christian life and more comforting in view of death and the infinite beyond. One thing we assert as beyond all question, because now vouched for by a very wide experience, that to those who this key the entire Bible becomes a more luminous and helpful book, and many passages that before seemed confused, contradictory, or even meaningless, cease to be perplexing and become radiant with a satisfactory meaning. May the divine blessing lead each reader into the knowledge of the truth.

ABERDEEN, October, 1894.

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THE GREAT DAY OF THE LORD

Introductory

***“ IF TRUTH DO ANYWHERE MANIFEST ITSELF, SEEK NOT TO
SMOTHER IT WITH GLOSSING DELUSIONS, ACKNOWLEDGE THE
GREATNESS THEREOF, AND THINK IT YOUR BEST; VICTORY
WHEN THE SAME DOTH PREVAIL OVER YOU.”***

— HOOKER'S *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Pref. Sec. 9

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Page 1- THE GREAT DAY OF THE LORD - stands like a background of red-hot fire in all the Scriptures from Isaiah to Revelation. Judgement is God's strange work; but in a world of sin, with a righteous God upon his throne, the tones of threatening must always be reverberating through the air. Happily, even in Old Testament revelation, God's judgement-day is always at the same time **"the day of his salvation."**

" Destruction and salvation are the hands Upon the face of time."

All salvation is by fire; to save is necessarily to destroy. Hence the great Messianic Salvation for which Israel hoped, is identical with **" That great day of the Lord "** in which **" his fury shall burn like an oven."** **" The acceptable year of the Lord "** is **" the day of vengeance of our God."**

Interpreters of prophecy vainly think that the prophets were somewhat confused in their outlook. **Isaiah is charged with confounding the first and second advents of our Lord**, while those two events were lying at least 2000 years apart. Those old Seers were better instructed than their commentators. The advents were resolved into one because they are substantially one, both as to their intention and their time.

Page 2 - The Two Advents One - The unvarying testimony of the Scripture is that **the same generation sees the consummate sacrifice of our great High Priest and the desolating judgements** of our righteous King. The New Testament day of judgement is the historical boundary line between the legal age and that gospel era which is **" the acceptable year of the Lord."** It takes both the first and second, the suffering and the reigning Christ's, to introduce the gospel dispensation; just as it takes the dead and the risen Christ to constitute that one Mediator who can save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

That such is the standpoint alike of Old Testament and New Testament writers may be seen at a glance by any one who will be at the pains to look for this idea in the Scriptures. Our Lord lived and suffered in the latter years of the Mosaic age, and taught his disciples that his work, whether He lived or died, was to bring that age to an end. As plainly as language could express it, He told them that his work would be completed ere [before] many years had passed. Accordingly, their eyes were ever looking forward to that awful day, significantly called **" the last."** **They speak of themselves as living in the last days, in the end of the age, on the edge of a fearful crisis which will shake the heavens and the earth;** and they plainly recognize that Christ's saving work is not complete until this judgement is consummated. This is the reason why all through the New Testament we have sounding the trumpet of immediate judgement; or, to revert to a former figure, why the background of the Scriptures is the red-hot fire of judgement. Christ's saving work is not finished with his sacrifice.

Page 3 - The Gospels and the Apocalypse One - He is to reign and judge — destroy his and his people's enemies — before his saints can enter into their eternal rest, and the world be made to realize the marvellous fact that God has come to dwell on earth and to bestow his pardon and salvation without distinction as to race, or as to the greatness of men's sins.

The Apostle John was especially chosen and prepared to explain to the expectant Church those aspects of Christ's conquering work with which it was immediately concerned. He had to tell his generation in what facts they could discern the boundary line of the old and new ages of the world; where and how they were to read "*the sign of the Son of Man*," and feel assured that He had prepared a place for them in heaven, called up his saints from the grasp of Hades, and secured a certain victory for his Gospel on the earth. This message was conveyed in his book of "**Revelation**"; ominous with meaning for its times; as pregnant with meaning for ourselves. Never will it be an old almanac, void of sense, except by the help of a library of historians. Preeminently, it is the record of Christ's saving work in continuance of his earthly sacrifice, — so essentially bound up with it, that without the Apocalypse, the Gospels are incomplete and meaningless. In short, it is the final and crowning word of revelation — filling up Paul's profound epitome of the Saviour's mission "**for to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.**" Rom 14.9. The Gospels are "**the earthly things**" of Christ; the Revelation is "**the heavenly**"; the former tell us that He died and rose again, the latter that He lives and is the Lord both of the LIVING and the DEAD.

Page 4- "Blessed is He that Readeth" - Therefore the Revelation of St. John is not a book to be evaded and left enigmatical to the Church; or which can be neglected without serious injury to the Church's doctrine and life. We trust that many of our readers to whom it has been hitherto a sealed page, or a stumbling block, will find it to be one of the most suggestive and comforting portions of the Word of God.

May the good Lord endow reader and author alike with the spirit of wisdom and interpretation, that *they* may be worthy of the blessing pronounced upon those who read and understand.

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

INTRODUCTORY.

CHAPTER 1.

Page 5 - THE opening verses of John's book are equivalent to the title page of a modern volume. That head line "***The Revelation of Jesus Christ***" is a comprehensive summary, implying that the main scope of the work is the manifestation or unveiling of what Jesus Christ truly is in his divine nature and his saving work. This Apocalypse is to be seen in "***the things which should shortly come to pass.***" Christ is by no means about to reveal Himself in his naked personality to the eyes of men; nor to be made the subject of a treatise in which his essential nature and relations to the Church and world will be exhaustively unfolded. He is to reveal himself **IN CERTAIN FACTS OF HISTORY.**

As these unfold themselves they will be seen to contain "**a manifestation of his presence,**" a demonstration of his superior nature and exalted functions as the One Great High Priest of Humanity, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth, whose will must finally become supreme. Some what as the effective miracle of the words "***Rise up and walk,***" was the visible sign and pledge of the invisible blessing of the words "***thy sins are forgiven thee,***" so the outward and visible deeds here prophesied again, as they had been in the days of our Saviour's flesh, were to stand as signs of power and blessing issuing from their Lord in unseen and eternal spheres.

Page 6 - Christ Revealed in History - Such being the ostensible purpose of the book, it is evident that **this "Revelation"** can be given only in events which "***must shortly come to pass***" A personal revelation in historical occurrences fixed for a *distant* day, or **beginning in some near day and slowly dragging itself onward in unspecialized events standing hundreds of years apart**, could have rendered no possible service to the early Church; and unhappily, as we know, could only keep in perplexity the Church of successive centuries. To have any power of comfort for the Church, or any force of conviction for the world, it must be a process of comparatively brief and compact dimensions; condensed almost into an episode; a tableau of events which can be seen almost at one glance of the eye.

Now, in the title page of the book there are no less than **FIVE** distinctive indications of **the whereabouts in history** this "unveiling" must transpire.

(1) We have the intimation that *God gives this revelation to* Jesus Christ. Earlier in Scripture we are told on high authority that the very angels in heaven do not know the day and hour of the coming of the Son of Man;

and not even the Son Himself, but the Father only, who keeps the times and seasons in his power. The fact that *now* the day and hour are communicated to the Son is proof of the immanence [all pervading] of the event. "***The Father loveth the Son and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth,***" that is, as He proceeds to execute them.

The time is come for God to work; then Christ is sent to give the revelation to his waiting and expectant Church. Indeed, Christ becomes, as we shall see, the executor of the Father's will.

Page 7 - A Book for its Times.- (2) This Revelation is for Christ's "*servants*" of whom John is one. Primarily, this revelation is not the book; it is the actual historical unveiling of the majesty of Christ. The events narrated are to happen in order to reveal Christ to his servants then on earth. That the revelation is an actual unveiling before that generation seems implied in the order to transmit the necessary key to the events to the churches over whom John was exercising presbyterial functions, and through them to the universal company of believers.

(3) The same is clear from the fact that those to whom the book is sent are "*hearers*" in the churches when the book is read, and are required "***to keep the things written therein***" by fidelity to Christ in the midst of the events in which the "unveiling" is being-realized. ***But how could those addressed be seriously concerned in the prophecy of the book, if no part of it is yet fulfilled, or even if by far the greater portion lay in the dim and distant future,*** and especially that event which really is the only one of practical importance in the book — **the second coming of their Lord ?** Does the language not imply that "***the prophecy***" is one, condensed, immediate, — the coming of their Lord to them, — putting the Church upon a new probation ?

The epistles to the churches will clearly show that the book is not so much a series of events as one event, **the Coming of the Lord**; and that the prophecy from first to last enters into the life of the existing members of those churches, tests them individually like a judgement day, and rewards or punishes openly before the world. How vastly different is the standpoint of the apostle and his contemporaries from that of a recent expositor who makes the daring statement that

"It is clear that God, though giving the prophecy in the apostolic age, cannot have intended it to be understood for many, many subsequent generations."

Page 8 - Does God Educate by Delusions ? - Thus, we are invited to believe that this book was really intended to be. A mystification of the church for eighteen centuries; that God calls darkness light, and deludes his people by false hopes.

If God educates his people by such delusions, where does this process end ? May not the hope of a second coming be as delusive for this century and the next as it was for the first ? May not the hope of immortality itself be only a benevolent *ignis fatuus* to lead the Church across the bogs of sensualism to firmer walking ground ? The method savours too much of a trick to be divine. The book pledges itself at its birth to be a book whose words are "**faithful and true,**" and in the keeping of whose instructions there is a great reward. "**Let God be true and every man a liar.**"

(4) This unveiling of Christ is to be given in *things which "MUST SHORTLY come to pass"* These words ought to put beyond all controversy the substantial meaning of the book. Unhappily, few English exegetes have been prepared to stand by their direct sense. One class reads them as if they ran — "**things which must shortly begin to come to pass.**" Alford, although he actually interprets the book according to this false sense, denies strenuously its validity. The meaning is, he says, "**things which in their entirety must soon come to pass,**" — "**must have come to pass**" — "**be fulfilled.**" Others admit that the clause must cover the whole transactions of the book, but put this word "**shortly**" on the rack and stretch it out over at least 2000 years. "**It is God's word, and we never know what shortly may mean with Him, to whom a day is as a thousand years.**"

Page 8 - "The Day of Jehovah" - On this principle we cannot know what any word from God may mean, whatever it may concern, for God is not at any time a man. But certainly this elastic treatment of the temporal clement in prophecy cannot be justified in one single case: and is actually refuted by the classical case in Daniel, by which it is most frequently defended. Dr. Briggs assures us that *near* and *at hand* in the prophetic books mean nothing: are only stock bits of furniture in the prophetic art. The "**day of Jehovah**" was at hand alike to Joel and to Malachi; and Jesus and the Apostles go on using the same loose and confusing speech. (*Messianic Prophecy*, p. 54.)

Such blundering has no existence save in the imagination of slovenly or careless interpreters, who, if they were not deceived by phrases, would see that the prophecies they confound do not refer to the same impending judgements. There are **many "days of Jehovah"** in the visions of the prophets. Now, it is the destruction of Moab, then it is Jerusalem in danger of Scythian or Assyrian invasion; or it is Babylon threatened by the Medes, or Egypt defeated on the Euphrates; occasionally it is a purely ideal and general judgement of the enemies of the Church.

To mix all these judgement days together, and charge the prophets with confusion, is an unpardonable sin. Whenever a prophet says that "**the day of the Lord is near,**" **it will be found on the simplest comparison of his prophecy with contemporary history, that some terrible calamity is**

impending in which God's hand is to be seen. This blunder, into which too many writers have fallen, may be explained thus: — They imagine the prophet to be thinking of an ideal and final judgement which is described as near, while actually distant; whereas he is thinking of a specific day of judgement which is actually near, but which in its processes and results he describes in ideal terms.

.Page 10 - *Were the Apostles Mistaken ?* - It is forgotten that the prophet is poet as well as seer. These various judgement days are not to be confounded because described in similar terms. The prophets are not to be supposed as looking through a haze, and having "***no sense of perspective.***"

All such uncomplimentary comments should cease, and prophecy be read according to the plain straightforward sense it must have carried to those for whom it was spoken at the first. However, it is no prophetic utterance we have here; but a business and prosaic record of the apostle's own interpretation of his book. It is after he has received his visions, mastered their contents, and is about to put them into literary form for the Asiatic churches that he deliberately pens these words — pens them with a human and honest sense.

What did John mean by the words **ἐν τάχει** ***shortly*** ? Did he really understand the events of Christ's **parousia** to be just impending ? No scholar doubts that such was the real belief of the apostolic age; and therefore, on the theory we combat, we are invited to look back upon the painful spectacle of those "***inspired apostles***" — Christ's faithful companions and martyrs — blundering on such a simple matter — inspired to utter phrases which deceived themselves and conveyed wrong impressions to the Church ! We cannot but feel sorry for those deceived apostles, worthy of more candid treatment; but what are we to think of the divine action in the case ? Is it enough to cover it (as Mr. Guinness does) with the soft apology — "***The Holy Ghost did not deceive them.***" **Pray, Sir, who deceived them first of all ?** At how many more apostolic misapprehensions does God wink ?

Page 11 - "*Shortly* " means— What ? - Is it a part of God's general method to use language which deceives ? Is it possible that He can employ tools so sinister and offensive ?

It is maintained, however, that "***shortly***" is "a prophetic formula " of all ages, and means nothing in this place. Alford, followed by the Speaker's Commentary, stakes the whole case upon our Lord's use of the word in Luke 18.8, — "***He will avenge them speedily***", where, he [Alford] says, "***long delay is evidently implied.***" We are perfectly willing to take up the challenge, especially since the subject of our Lord's discourse is identical

with the subject of John's Revelation. Our Lord looks forward to the time when, in the social disorders and persecutions of a closing age, his apostles will be sorely pressed, and many of them martyred for the faith. Then (as in the corresponding passage in Rev 6.10), their blood will cry from the ground for revenge, and ascend with the groans of their fellow saints on earth. At first God cannot grant their prayer ; but He says to them: — "***Rest for a little season until your fellow-servants and your brethren which should be killed like you shall be fulfilled,***" then relief will come. Thus our Lord teaches his disciples to persevere in prayer, with the assurance that just when God seems deaf to their bitter cry, their victory is near. They are to know that "***it is darkest just before the dawn***"; that "***when things are at the worst they begin to mend***"; and therefore the word "***speedily***" is expressly intended to oust every possibility of the notion of delay.

Page 12 - "*The Time is at Hand*" delay. Surely the disciples would easily understand that from the moment of their faintness and despair, relief was near. So plainly is deliverance near to the temporal standpoint of the thought of Christ, that one may well marvel that able expositors should be capable of such mistakes as to pen: "***here speedily implies long delay.***" We claim that it can mean nothing but *speedily*; and that the idea of *delay* would choke all breath out of the parable.

(5) The solemn assurance, "***the time is at hand***" hold to be an honest word; and as such it is made a argument for watchfulness. If, as a matter of fact, the prophecy hardly concerned that generation, what truth is in the apostolic statement, or what force in the argument? Then who is responsible for the excitement of hopes destined to be disappointed; for the culture of church piety by baseless fears and deceitful promises? Is it lawful to do evil that good may come We are not ashamed to press this argument once again. These are questions that must be faced.

PREFACE AND DEDICATION (1.4-20).

JOHN'S mind is stored so full of the soul-stirring scene which he has beheld in trance that, as soon as he: face to face with his readers, he anticipates his subject in abrupt and broken utterances of the sublimest character. The Christ whom he reveals is at the very first the Christ both of the Gospels and the Apocalypse - He who shed his blood for men, and is now "***The Ruler of the Kings of the Earth,***" who has made his Church kingdom and his people priests, destined to supremacy on the earth. His present message to the churches is —

Page 13 - *The time and place of the Parousia.* "***The unveiling of the hidden glory of the Crucified is near. He cometh in his kingdom. All eyes***

shall see the signs of his kingly dignity, and especially that people who slew Him as if he had been a worm and no Son of God. All the tribes of the land shall beat their breasts over Him. Amen — So let it be."

***[It may be as well to note here, once for all, that the Greek word so frequently translated "earth," mean, also " land," and ought as a rule to have been so translated,]**

Here again we have a key to the true interpretation of the book. John quotes from Zech 12. where the prophet is typically teaching that before the ideal age comes in Israel will have ***"to mourn that she pursued with mortal enmity a servant of God sent to bear witness to the truth."*** The sorrow of that day is to fill all the land of Israel in its tribes, and to be particularly distressing in Jerusalem.

Surely John's quotation of these words indicates his belief that they are hastening to fulfillment, and points us to the field on which the apocalypse is mainly to transpire. The tragedy begins while the Jew is still in possession of the land, while Jerusalem stands, and while some of that generation which pierced the Christ are still alive to be visited by the fitting Nemesis of their crime. The same limit of time was fixed by our Lord Himself for his *parousia* — ***" This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled;" — " Some of you standing here shall not taste of death till you see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."***

It is a glaring fact that in almost every possible form, Christ indicates the whereabouts in place and time of his coming, and that in every instance it is near to those who stand about Him, and involves the unbelieving in a penalty which is at once the rupture of their national covenant with God, and the destruction of their national life. ***"Judgement must begin at the house of God."***

Page 14 - "In the Spirit" - In Christ's day this judgement is within a lifetime, a generation; in the Epistles it is **"at hand"**; in the Apocalypse it is come. The Jew, as Paul and James so clearly intimate, is to bear the brunt of it; but the thunderbolts that shake the city of God to its foundations will send out their waves of trouble and distress to the ends of the earth.

John, the son of the eagle eye, was languishing in banishment for the testimony of Jesus. In the midst of his sufferings, he must often have remembered the enigmatical saying of his Lord concerning the terminus of his earthly life — ***"What if he tarry till I come ?"*** John 21.22 and fondly cherished the expectation that he would be spared to see the day when his Lord would take his mighty power and reign. At length a mystic hand is laid on him, and he too becomes as one who has transcended death. The deep eternal world is all around him. Christ is discovered to be in no

distant sphere, but present with his Church even before the end of the age. Consciousness needs only to be turned inward from the sphere of sense, in order to witness the occurrences and scenes of that deeper and more enduring world.

Immediately, John learns that he has been brought hither for a purpose. He is to see marvellous things; and to write his visions in a book that the men of his time may ponder its lessons and be blessed in their observance. In John's first vision he saw a picture that was dear to him, because it reminded him of a sacred past; and sad as dear, because it prophesied of a splendour that was soon to pass away.

Page 15 - "Jesus Crowned." - This golden candlestick is not now, alas, the glory of the temple; it has become the symbol of the Christian Church.

In this centre of illumination stands one like the Son of Man, as John had seen Him in his transfigured glory. The face of this heavenly personage is so dazzling in its burning splendour that John is glad to rest his eyes upon the drapery which invests Him.

The garments are sacerdotal. Now, the Aaronic priesthood is entirely superseded; the Son of Man Himself is the High Priest of humanity. The smoke of burning flesh still ascends from the altars of Jerusalem; but only to affront the majesty of heaven. Visibly the seven-branched candlestick is in its place; but its light is burning to the socket and will soon go out. Jerusalem is no longer the divine centre of the world; because supplanted by that Church in which Christ dwells, and through which He is the light of the world.

Such is the marvellous transformation which has taken place upon that Jesus who parted from his disciples on Mount Olivet, as only the sublimest of all men, and hitherto too much conceived of as still hampered by the small dimensions of our manhood. The manhood is indeed retained; but He has now become the Ancient of Days described in prophetic scenes, the Eternal Wisdom, white with the splendours of its purity.

The eyes of his Divine Intelligence go to and fro to search the evils and excellencies of all hearts; even in his feet, where He comes closest to the earth, his outgoings are most glorious. Altogether, Christ is revealed to his Church, in his divinest and most gracious attributes. He is the Great High Priest, the voice of Everlasting Love, the Sun that brightens all man's heaven, the King who wields the all-conquering sword of truth, and carries the keys of eternal kingdoms in his hands.

Page 16 - What Christ is to the Church - He is no longer the tender martyr, or the resuscitated prophet of the Church's feeble faith, but the very Christ of God, exalted far above all angels, clothed with the attributes

of the Eternal. This Son of God is going forth to war; He is taking to Him his great power, and is to reign until his enemies are judged and scattered. His fainting Church will see ere long that she is destined to prevail and to fill the whole earth with her glory.

This then is the **"Revelation of Jesus Christ."** The contents of the book are to answer to the features of this image, prove it true. The churches are to watch and see if the immediately unfolding history of the world does not illustrate and confirm its teaching, and his supernatural claim. They have thought of Him as afar off in the heavens; they must learn that He has always been amongst them.

Just as they are despairing of the triumph of the cross they are to be assured that the moment is at hand when the tide of victory will turn. When their enemies are most triumphantly asserting that the Christ is for ever dead, they are to see that He has risen indeed, and not as a man might rise, but as God must rise when He takes the form of our humanity. This was a revelation suited for the hour, and for all time.

The Church is the kingdom and city of God. Read in this book her mission. Interpret by this book her various trials; discern, if you will, her future history. This book explains it all, simply because it is a revelation of what Christ is to the Church, and how Christ fulfils his will in the Church's destiny.

Page 17 - The Limits of the Book. - It is from Christ himself that John receives his commission to write this book. Its contents are prescribed in a form which John could neither mistake nor disobey. **" Write what thou sawest" (or hast seen when the visions are finished), " both the things which are "** (the then existing state of things in the seen and unseen worlds in their interrelations) **" and what is about (μελλει *) to happen after these,"** — the changes which must immediately supervene.

*** [While the Revised Version does more justice than the Received to this verb expressing the immediateness of events, it often in this and other books of Scripture most unreasonably gives it the go-by: especially when its reference is to the second coming, the resurrection and the judgement.]**

Here then is the well-defined field of history to be embraced within the book. Is it not the very climax of absurdity to treat a book whose subject is so strictly limited, as if it were a chart of universal history, an almanac with enigmatical dates covering undecipherable distances of time ? The book is pledged again and yet again to treat substantially of its own immediate times, — and it can only be in some merely incidental way, and with frankest acknowledgment, that it will venture to step beyond the bounds assigned to it. With no warning to the contrary, we shall stand by common sense and common honesty in seeking for the meaning of the book.

CHRIST'S MESSAGE TO THE CHURCHES.

CHAPTERS 2 - 3

"Watch, for ye know: not the hour of the coming of the Son of Man."

Page 18 - THESE seven epistles are passionate even burning A. appeals to actual historical assemblies of believers. It is beyond the right of exegetes to give these churches a typical [**like a double fulfillment**] significance; or to break up their evidently contemporaneous existence into seven successive periods covering the entire history of the Church.

THE TIME OF CHRIST'S COMING

is described as urgent and immediate to each individual church, to the last, no more so than to the first. **To Ephesus**, Christ says: "*I will come quickly.*" **To Smyrna**, his coming is preceded by a brief affliction soon to fall on them: "*Fear not the things, which thou art about to suffer; behold the devil is about to cast some of you into prison.*" **Pergamos** is threatened with immediate judgement: "*Repent or I come quickly.*" **Thyatira** is told that the long suffering of the Lord is exhausted and judgement about to begin (2.21, 22, 25).

Sardis is exhorted to watch because the storm may burst at any hour. **Philadelphia** is told that an hour of judgement is *about* to come on all the world in which Christ will be present to protect his friends, as well as to war against his foes, **Laodicea** is threatened with immediate rejection:

"I will soon spue thee out of my mouth. . . Behold, I stand at the door."

Page 19 - "**Watch !**" - Thus the crisis is as near to the last church as to the first — equally near to all, in the same events. It is difficult to see how the churches could interpret this message with any other meaning, in absence of the slightest hint to justify a repeated, successive or distant fulfillment of its solemn warnings.

As a matter of fact, the universal Church was at that time in **lively expectation** of Christ's [2nd] coming; and, therefore, these epistles sent from Christ Himself could not but intensify the certainty that the most tremendous climax in the world's history was **at hand**. **No ulterior end, such as that of keeping the Church always on the alert for Christ's coming, can justify the use of deceptive language in the Scripture.**

The Son of God is not so impotent as to require to delude his Church into beliefs which, for the vast majority, can have no fulfillment. **If this tricky method** were pursued by any other founder of religion, it would be universally stigmatized **as unworthy** Jesuitry. We ought not to impute such methods to Him whose word is — Yea and Amen.

THE MORAL STATE OF THE CHURCHES

is precisely that which long before it had been prophesied to be at our Lord's *Parousia*. Christ describes his peradventure Church as suffering persecution, inundated with false teachers, strifes, seditions, and impurities, "***whereby the love of many shall wax cold.***"

Paul warns the Thessalonians that the coming will not be "***until the falling away come first.***" Timothy is instructed "***that in the last days grievous times shall come;***" false teachers will abound, sensual lusts invade the Church, and lawlessness prevail.

Page 20 - The Falling Away - Peter minds his readers that they had been forewarned of the corrupt condition of the Church in "***the last of the days,***" and points them to the evils then existing as corroborations of these prophecies. John, in his epistles cites the abounding heresies of his day as proofs that "***the last hour***" is come. Jude quotes Paul's prophecy as to the last time, and puts his finger on the evil doers who fulfill it: "***these are they who make separations, sensual, having not the Spirit.***"

Let our reader once again cast his eye over the state of the Apocalyptic churches, and there he will find every evil in full blast which the Gospels and Epistles foretell as symptomatic of the coming of the threat day of the Lord. ***The whole Apostolic Church, if we may judge it by its named representatives, is in a state of serious relapse. Weary of its terrible conflict with its foes, invaded by Gnostic thought and heathen vice, tormented by Jewish spite, it is faint and ready to die.*** The critical hour is come when Christ must either go down or conquer.

THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE OF THESE CHURCHES

is interestingly bound up in the events and especially in the issues about to happen in the world's history: described spiritually in this book.

The **Ephesus** is to make her choice between extinction and the last scene of the book — true life in the Paradise of God. **Smyna** is appointed to the martyrdoms of chap. 6. and 12, and to be rewarded with deliverance from the second death (20.14;21.8).

Page 21- Coming in Church Experience - Pergamos is threatened with the sharp sword of the Word of God (19.), and encouraged to repentance with the promise of being scaled with the new name, given to the elect (14.). **Thyatira** is to be visited with great tribulation (6. and 16.), but the faithful are to sit with the man child on God's throne (12, 19.), and enjoy "***the morning star,***" i.e. the coming day, which Christ's advent heralds in (22.16). **Sardis** is warned, in language repeated in (16.15), at the very crisis of the coming, that if found faithful she will be dressed in white robes

(7.9-13) for the marriage supper of the Lamb, and have the final victory of eternal life (19.) **Philadelphia** is promised that the Jew shall be humbled at the Christian's feet, and the victors made pillars in the temple of God, and citizens of the New Jerusalem (21.). To **Laodicea** comes the warning of rejection; but on amendment, a share in Christ's victory and kingdom.

Thus patiently have we gone over these epistles to put before our readers the significant fact that the events connected with Christ's coming, as described in subsequent visions, are distinctly set before these churches as experiences through which they must pass, and whose happy fruits they may reap. They are warned of an immediately impending struggle between the powers of Light and Darkness, in which they will suffer, but out of which they will be spared to come as victors.

The promise to **Philadelphia** is expressly significant. The Jew had been the bane of the Apostolic Church: *"its thorn in the flesh"* — often as troublous inside the Church as out of it. He claimed to be still the *praised of God*; and like Ishmael, persecuted the Isaac of the Spirit. When in amiable relations with his Roman master, his one aim was to stir up Rome to crush the Church of Christ.

Page 22 - The Key to the Visions - The moment is now come when his pride will be overthrown, his power to injure broken, his covenant relationship be annulled, and his privileges visibly passed over to the believer in Christ Jesus. The old Jerusalem is about to pass away, the new about to come down from God in heaven [Ed. not till after the Millenium]. A new era dawns for the Church and the world. This is the key to the events about to come to pass. The whole unfolding of the book from first to last is an experience immediately awaiting them as Churches of Jesus Christ. If we will not see this fact, so plainly intimated before the visions dawn, we deserve to miss their meaning, and to be given over to the fate of those who *"delude themselves by the believing of a lie."*

PART I.

NIGHTFALL; OR THE LAST DAYS
OF THE JEWISH AGE

“ The Lord shall Judge his people ”

" Who unto us ! for the day declineth, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out."

Then sank the star of Solyma,
Then passed her glory's day,
Like heath that in the wilderness
The light wind whirls away.
Silent and waste her bowers
Where once the mighty trod,
And sunk those guilty towers,
Where Baal reigned as God."—*Moore.*

HEAVEN OPENED

CHAPTER 4.

*“ The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice
He sitteth between the Cherubims, let the earth be moved “*

Page 25 - WE are now on the eve of that predicted cataclysm by which a dispensation which has “ **waxed old** ” is to be providentially broken up, and a new and better era introduced into the world. If we remember the crisis of the hour we shall soon discover the meaning of the vision which John proceeds to write. Many of the earliest readers of the Apocalypse were familiar with the scene depicted here.

Ezekiel the prophet had had a similar vision when an exile by the river Chebar. Jerusalem dragged on a weary existence under a king whom Nebuchadnezzar had set over it. The Jews left in the city had profited nothing by the chastisement, and still worshipped idols in the temple dedicated to Jehovah.

Then this solemn vision comes to Ezekiel, and he is bidden prophesy that a severer storm of judgement is about to break upon the holy city, Jerusalem is to be trodden down, the temple to be demolished, the city of God left desolate, the old kingdom of God to disappear ! But Ezekiel was made to understand that there was a Divine Providence in the calamities of his time. He learns that if the old order changes it is to give place to a new and better; that the judgements which befall his people will not uproot God's kingdom from the earth, but in reality prepare the way for more glorious manifestations of his power, and a still more gracious fullness of his presence among men.

Page 26 - Ezekiel and John - This Apocalyptic vision is so like Ezekiel's because John's circumstances are the same. The older prophet was in banishment — John was an exile for the word of Christ. Ezekiel's generation was crushed by the Babylonian beast — John's was oppressed by the mightier incubus of Rome. Ezekiel's Jerusalem was about to be laid in ruins because it had rejected the Servant, John's because it rejected the Son of God. In both epochs, the judgement would necessarily seem to be destructive of all God's promises to his people, and of all hope for the regeneration of the world.

In the latter epoch, the Church was as yet so outwardly identified with the Jewish people and so little severed from Jewish thought, that it could not but share largely in the trials of the times, if it did not altogether sink in the general collapse.

And so, as the faithful in Ezekiel's time were strengthened for impending judgements by **a vision of God's throne**, and a reconstructed temple far excelling the glory of the past, John and the Church are also solaced by the assurance that God still reigns, and uses all the forces of the universe for the advancement of his cause.

" The Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up."

Heaven is opened to John's sight. There is the throne of God. It is not empty. It is not possessed by a multiplicity of powers that rule the earth with divided counsel. One sits on it. One Will rule over all.

Page 27 - Love and Severity in God - One Supreme Intelligence directs the course of history. One plan is being carried out from the foundation of the world to the final consummation of its destiny. The character of the Deity who reigns is symbolized by the bright translucent gleam of jasper and the rich red glow of the sardius stone.

There is no mixture nor confusion; but all over that transcendent form there is both the gleam of the purity of truth and the rich warm glow of love. Behold your God ! not the God of Calvary only, sweet to look on in his mingled tenderness and love, but as well the God of righteousness and truth. We shall read very soon of ***" the fierceness of his wrath ! "*** but look beneath the surface, and there is the calmness of the unruffled sea. His judgement is not a bursting avalanche of passion; it is the inflexibility of his truth going forth to victory.

His justice and his mercy are the same, though of diverse aspects. The truth which condemns our evil saves us from its power. When God comes down to judge, He is a Father overwhelming us with the bitterness of our sins in order that He may purify and save; the severity of the jasper tempered by the generous warmth of the ruddy sardius.

Shining above the throne there is ***" a rainbow like emerald to look upon."*** This God is the old historic Yahweh of Israel. If the Gnostic heresy was in circulation by this time that the God of the Jews was another and inferior being to the God of Jesus Christ, and that He had come to dethrone Him, here is its refutation. It was this God who said — ***" I have set my bow in the heavens,"*** and He still remembers it in mercy. He is also the strong and jealous God of Mount Sinai. Now He says, ***"Yet once more I shake the earth."*** The quaking mountain was expressive of the goings forth of higher truth, the institution of new laws, the threatening of severer judgements.

Page 28 - Cherubim and Seraphim - Here, likewise, a new dispensation is to be officially begun. Old things are to pass away, all things are to be new. Another grand climacteric in the world's development has been reached. New light is to break forth from Jehovah's throne; a new fire

which will consume his enemies. It is indeed to be a war of THRONES; and Jehovah's sovereignty will assert itself against all the priestly hierarchies, the tyrant Caesars, and the idol gods that have held dominion in this world.

In the front of that throne *"are seven lamps of fire. burning, which are the seven spirits of God"* The deep meaning of this symbol is still hidden, but we may safely say, with Bohme, that it points to seven fundamental powers that penetrate and illumine the universe.

The effluent influence of God is well illustrated by the light and heat of fire. God is our Sun: his love and light, in all their sevenfold diversity, flow forth continually to quicken and inspire his creatures.

"And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal" This sea would look as if it were the floor of heaven; the foundation of God's throne. Does that throne rest on darkness and on mystery? Are God's ways full of perplexity and crookedness? Nay, the principles of his government are most transparent. His throne is established in righteousness, and all the outgoings of his rule are truth and equity.

"Cherubim and Seraphim, crying—Holy, holy, holy."

Round about the throne were placed *"four Living Ones,"* bearing the likenesses respectively of a Lion, a Calf, a Man, and a flying Eagle.

Page 29 - Divine Providence - It is significant that these are the principal types which the ancient world chose to symbolize the Divine; yet great diversity prevails as to their interpretation. It seems impossible to do better than to understand them as embodiments of the powers or qualities of God in his government of the world and its nations. *"Strength and Courage are Divine,"* said the Assyrian.

In the government of God, there is no lack of either in the treatment of his friends or foes. His utterance of judgement is like the lion's assault upon its foes; his vigilance is like the lion searching for its prey — unsparing in its efforts to rend the carcase of every false and evil thought that lodges in the mind of man. "Usefulness is Divine" said other ancient nations.

The plodding ox, what better symbol of patience and fruitful force? Divine Providence is not merely like a lion going forth to slay, but like a patient ox turning all its toil to fruitfulness. If God destroy, it is that He may build again; if your error is exposed, it is to lead you to the truth; if you are afflicted, it is to correct your ways; all divine activity issues in abiding good. The human form divine is Wisdom inspired by charity. Such indeed are the energies of God — most wisely ordered, most humanely inspired; and ever working upward with the intelligence, the penetration, the unwearied flight of the eagle.

There is aspiration, progressive evolution in the processes of God; a power that lifts all creation up into diviner forms, and forever beautifies the sons of men. ***"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."***

Page 30 - All to the Glory of God - The **"eyes"** with which these Living Ones are endowed are expressive of the Divine Omniscience which accompanies them in their action, the infallibility with which they act; and the **"wings"** again tell that they never grovel in the dust, but soar unwearyedly to higher and still higher heights of excellence.

Accordingly, their final cause in the universe is to manifest and declare the glorious character of God. Does history reveal a power within it, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness? Is God's government unfolding happily and progressively as the ages roll ? Is the earth being surely, if slowly, delivered from its vanity and corruption ?

Does the human race progress under the courageous, practical, kindly, and inspiring Providence of God ? Men ask these questions, not without their fears that the world goes from bad to worse; but whatever be the devious courses of the stream, let us heartily believe that the Living Powers that work upon this world as the hands of God, are such as John described — infallible by their omniscience and ever rising upward in their spiral course; — there fore never resting in ascribing ***"glory, honour, and thanks"*** to Him that sitteth on the throne, by the growing betterness and beauty of the world.

"Principalities and Powers in the Heavenlies"

Apparently outside the circle of these Living Ones are ***"four and twenty Elders, seated upon thrones, wearing white robes, and having crowns of gold upon their heads"*** Who are these ? it may be asked; for the answer is not quite apparent. Sometimes they are taken to be representatives of the Christian Church, but more frequently twelve prophets and the twelve apostles, representing the Old and New Covenants.

Page 31 - The four and twenty Elders - We believe it to be altogether a mistake to find the Church already standing round the throne of God in heaven. Even the Lamb is not yet seen there; therefore it is impossible to have redeemed humanity.

These Elders are not human; they have not passed through the great tribulation, nor been redeemed from the earth. As Kelly notices, to the destruction of his own interpretation, ***"their worship does not go beyond the thought that God had created and sustained all things."*** With Reuss, we take them to be angels of the highest rank, a grand celestial priesthood,

who, by reigning over God's creation, give Him that continuous glory which is his due. Perhaps, we ought even to go the length of identifying them with that order of angels in whose hands the Mosaic Covenant was ordained (Gal 3.19; Heb 2.2).

Let us not forget, however, that we are dealing only with a symbol. And yet, why may there not be in the spiritual universe actual thrones and dominions for the due administration of God's will ? Let us not fancy that in discovering kings and priests in heaven we are simply carrying up our human notions and transforming heaven according to our earthly models.

It may be that the Elders are 24 because there were 24 courses in the Jewish priesthood; and yet, may it not rather be that the earthly arrangement was the shadow of the order in the heavens ? Perhaps after all, heaven is not so unlike earth; except that it is the sublimation of our noblest hopes, the unalloyed fulfillment of all that is good and true on earth. All its creatures are pursuing the highest good in contemplation and in action, because all of them refer their activities and joys to the holy inspirations of their God, and utterly forget themselves in the work committed to their trust.

Page 32 - Who is on the Throne ? - Ponder on this vision and you will see how fittingly it answers to the wants of John and his fellow Christians. The question which was gnawing at their hearts amid all the horrid disorder and oppression of those times was, Is Satan King of Kings and Lord of Lords? or is there after all a righteous God, and is that God upon his throne ? The answer is no dream of the night, no fanciful speculation, no dogma from the schools, but an *open sight of heaven* — a revelation of God's throne as fixed and sure, in closest contact with the earth.

"The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." " There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early. The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

THE LAMB IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE.

CHAPTER 5.

" Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the Heavens."

Page 33 - ST. John might well be satisfied, for a time at least, with the vision which he had seen. He had been the witness of a turbulence and disorder down on earth which have been seldom, if ever, paralleled in the world's history. A Roman historian of the period (Tacitus, Annals, B. I. 2) has painted a powerful picture of the times in which this Revelation was given to the Church. Wars, earthquakes, intrigues, murders, domestic impurity, treachery, profanity, and political revolution, are the pigments with which he paints. Whatever were the common sufferings of the time, it was worse to be a Christian.

The follower of Jesus was then a social pariah on whom men might trample as on a worm, and whom corrupt officials delighted to hunt to death, in order to confiscate his goods to an empty exchequer, or for private spoil. Added to the disturbed condition of the churches, it was a time of perilous trial to the faith of many Christians. To an earnest soul like John's, racked with fears as to the future — longing for the coming of God's Kingdom, and yet doomed to see the world growing worse, and the state of the Church more hazardous.

Page 34 - The Book of Destiny - This vision of a throne set high in heaven, a government whose energies were full of eyes of wisdom, and clothed with wings of aspiration and progress, must have come with a peace and hope that made him calm and steadfast as a rock.

But this is only the beginning of a series of more brilliant revelations, — the first scene in a drama of many acts of ever-intensifying interest, in which is to be unfolded to the Church the dark and troublous path by which God will lead her to her final victory.

" The purpose of Him, that worketh all things after the council of his will."

John looked again at Him who sat upon this throne. *" On his right hand lay a. book."* The Seer at once divines that the contents are a matter of immediate interest to himself, and is eager to be told the meaning. Therefore we may safely say, this is the book of God's eternal purpose — the counsel of his Will — the thing that God will do against every opposing power. Many of us have been jealous of the doctrine that God has a written plan for each separate human life, to which every will must bow by

grim necessity. We have regarded such a doctrine as fatal to freedom, to morality, to religion; and as time has passed, our contention has been justified by an increasing concurrence of opinion. But we have had no jealousy of the doctrine that God has foreordained what He Himself shall bring to pass — that God has settled plans, the counsel of his own unerring wisdom, by which He ever works and guides the world to its certain destiny.

Page 35 - Who knows he Mind of the Lord ? - Such a faith is of prime necessity when men are called upon to struggle for the true and right in the face of odds that might well appall the stoutest heart. It was a faith essential to the earliest pioneers of gospel truth, as they flung themselves into the midst of savage hordes to conquer or to die. Without this faith, the fires of persecution would have withered the spirits of our own reforming forefathers. Instead of battling against mighty odds with a hope that rarely died, and a strength like the very strength of God, because they held themselves to be guided by a Will that was invincible, they must needs have yielded to despair, and crept into their mountain caves to die like beaten dogs. Through the faith that their cause was God's and that God marches to certain victory, the weakest was made mighty to labour and to endure.

" The things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God."

But how is it possible for men to know what God's hand may contain ? The cry of all ages is — ***"Who is worthy to open this book, able to break the seals that lock its contents from the ken of men ?"*** Man wants his augurs and his prophets very much, and is willing to pay the price of their charlatanism. ***"But no one in heaven, or in earth, or in the depths of hades,"*** can read the secret purposes of God.

The ***" times and seasons "*** are kept hidden even from the angels in the Father's hand. The book of God can be read only by some one who has a perfect apprehension of the mind of God; and if the book is to be translated for the ears of man, by some one who has a perfect apprehension of the wants and longings of the human heart.

Page 36 - Our problems solved in Christ - So eager was John, that a moment seemed like a century of delay, and his despair found vent in tears. Is it possible to grieve standing even in the presence of the throne? Tears are human. Dante meets Virgil with the challenge — ***"Art thou truly man or melancholy shade ?"*** The answer is — ***" Non uom; uomo gia fui," (not man; I once was man)***. The hallowed assurance of our Christian Faith is, that we shall be more human once we have crossed the threshold of that life. Before the unsolved problems of eternity, we too may be moved like John. His heart was with the Church; the destinies of his

people roused his interest; and there he hungers to know, whether the tree of life which God has planted on the earth, is to be torn up, or to root and spread itself in peace and joy to men ? But God shall wipe away all tears. An Elder said to John **" weep not ! "**

Ah, how often do we weep like John; too soon, before we know God's story to its end; weep because there is a little pause, and we fancy that it ends in darkness or in death, when, if only we were patient and had faith, we should anticipate a splendid culmination for whatever his Providence has begun. **" Behold, the Lion of the tribe, of Judah, the root of David, hath overcome to open the book and loose the seven seals thereof."**

These were familiar titles to the members of the Apostolic Church. They connect Jesus with the brightest hopes of Israel, the grandest promises of the old prophetic word; and point to Him as the heir of David's throne, whose right it is to reign over all the peoples and the princes of the earth.

But why has he such power, and through what special aptitudes does He prevail ? Behold, this *Lion*, name of power, magnanimity and courage, is in very deed a *Lamb*.

Page 37 - Sacrifice, the Way to Power - How contradictory, yet how true in the experience of the Church. The ways of the Lord are a combination of power and gentleness. Able to tear **and** destroy, his very fierceness is the play of love. He can slay and be slain. Here at this moment, He is the Lamb slain for our sin, the Lamb of wounded love, God's sacrifice for our salvation; but for the completion of his work, the Lamb must be as well the Lion who can destroy the enemies whom his love cannot transform.

" Exalted far above all Principalities and Powers"

This slain Lamb is ***"in the midst of the throne."*** Blind unbelief, so proud to be " unduped of fancy," says — ***" He is dead. Far hence He lies In the lone Syrian town,"***

but to those who have eyes to see, God has made it plain, that Christ has really ascended up to imperial power and splendour in the heavens. God is never in the future to be severed from this Lamb. His throne is never to be seen apart from Jesus crucified; in its very thunderings and lightnings there is the spirit of gentleness and love that suffered unto death that we might live. This Lamb is henceforth inside the mystic circle of the Elders and the Living Ones. In all directions, the energies of God flow out through the principle of self-sacrifice and mercy. None the more is God's government one of laxity and incompetence. The Lamb has *seven horns*, that is perfect power, and *seven eyes*, infinite discernment to detect the evil and the good.

Page 38 - All things put under Him - "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself."

The Lamb is invested with the judging and quickening powers of God: henceforth is to be held as most Divine. Then the Lamb ***took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne.***

This is the transformation of Old Testament revelation into the sweeter spirit of the New. The Father has given the kingdom to the Son. Moses is no longer master of the house; the Son is taking his mighty power to reign. The Lamb is now ***"the power of God."*** Henceforth it must be known that all highest power must take the form of love, and that they alone know God who see Him through this once suffering now triumphant Mediator.

"Let all the Angles of worship him"

This apotheosis of the Lamb is universally acknowledged in the heavens. ***"When God bringeth in his first begotten"*** into the highest heaven, Cherubim and Elders all fall down before the Lamb in homage to that Divine Man in whom both hemispheres of the universe are united, and a lost world reconciled to God. Now is the time for universal joy and thanksgiving. On earth Christ has achieved a mighty work, though it is still only in its bare inception. He has given to God a Church that even in its infancy is the mightiest power the world has ever known. The kingdom of God is come. Prophetically, the Church is seen to reign. It is the stone cut out of the mountain that hurled against the brutal kingdoms of the earth will grind the strongest of them to powder. Heaven begins its actual reign on earth; and this is the moment of high festival.

*** [If the reader will turn to the Revised Version (5.9-10), it will be seen that they who sing this new song of the Kingdom are no part of the redeemed. It is the heavenly hierarchy who here celebrate the initiation of the era. of redeeming love.]**

Page 39 - Christ Head over all - Surely this is indeed an answer to the cry of the troubled churches of John's time. Is the devil's carnival to reign on earth ? Are oppression and violence to prevail against the saints of God ? Hear the answer in the swelling song of heaven —

"The Lamb is the mightiest power; He is invested with the royalties of heaven and earth; He is the redeemer of his people from the grasp of every power that is inconsistent with the reign of peace and love. His Church is glorious in its might; as yet a small and secret company of kings and priests, it nevertheless rules the destinies of earth, and the nations that shall not acknowledge it shall perish."

Such was the assurance which came to that fainting Church from the throne of God. Small as yet was the company of them that kept the word

of God; but they were the kings of their generation, the wielders of that influence which more than all has shaped the world's growth through eighteen centuries.

In this joyful acclamation at the advent of the Lamb all ranks and orders of the angels join (5.11). That sacrificing love by which the world was redeemed concerns all ranks of God's creatures. The manifestation of his character as a God who suffers for his universe, suffers to abolish suffering amongst the creatures He has made, is an occasion of transcendent joy through all the sentient universe. Yea, down even to the unseen depths of being there can be but one response.

Page 40 - God in Christ - Wherever God in Christ is known and recognized, there can be only joy. God in Christ is the God of conciliation, of progress, of increasing light and liberty. As God in Christ is known, his praise shall increase through all eternity.

THE OPENING OF SIX SEALS

CHAPTER 6.

“ The time is come for judgement to begin at the house of God.”

Page 41 - THERE is something in the heart of man that makes him pry into the future. We ever look forward with good hope. Fortune, not misfortune, we anticipate; but no revelation of the future would be true to life that did not mix our joys with tears, and show us dark and lurid shadows falling here and there upon the silveriest path that human foot has trod. Perhaps John may weep again; this time, because the seals are opened and the future ominous with every token of distress and pain.

A seal is opened by the Lamb. Then John hears a voice of thunder say **“Come”** It is the utterance of the Lion: Providence in its strong commanding aspects; and this call is addressed to the rider and his horse not yet in the field of vision. The Lion is here the servant of the Lamb. An ancient prophet said they should **“lie down together;”** and the first true reconciliation was realized in Him who is at once the Judge and the Saviour of Men. But notice that even here the influence of the Lamb is uppermost. The strength and courage to devour and rend are completely at the bidding of the Lamb who was slain.

“ Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered.”

John saw, **“ and behold, a white horse, with a crowned rider, going forth conquering and to conquer.”** A power this with which the lion like aspect of Providence is in closest sympathy. It purports victory on victory.

Victory ! Vae Victis ! - I have felt strongly drawn to the interpretation given by Alford, Godet, and others, that this represents the conquering, invincible. Word of God — truth from the bow of doctrine, which is like an arrow in the hearts of the enemies of the king. Great is truth, and it must prevail in every province and dominion now enslaved by darkness and sin. There is, however, a certain incongruity between so sweet and pleasing a conception, and the dreadful images which follow; and I feel constrained to prefer another view. Emphasis is laid on *victory* — let us keep to that.

This horseman is the leader of an army; the commander of the awful powers that follow. These are for the time to be victorious. This rider then may only symbolize the invincibility of the powers that follow, the certainty that they shall do the work for which they are sent forth of God. May we not go a little further, and see the symbol of some imperial government, whose power has been hitherto invincible, and before whom there is still a course of victories. *Vae Victis !* In vain will be their resistance. If already they have been conquered, and are impelled by some impulse of

independence to re-assert their liberties, it is only to be smitten with a stronger hand, for God says that the conqueror shall be victorious still. But the picture is not all darkness. That conquering power is in the hand of God. Terrible, therefore, as are the figures that follow, John is consoled by the assurance that they are in the service of the Lamb.

" Wars and rumours of wars, and famines in divers places."

These seals are at once reduplications and expansions in their successive order.

Page 43 - Famine and Death - The white horse of the first; is in the second seal, the **red horse** of tumult, warfare, fratricidal strife. With war's red hoof trampling over the fertile fields, burning and treading into the mire what it cannot use, and withdrawing men from the peaceful ways of industry, there comes the dread **black horse** of famine and want. *"A measure of wheat for a penny ! "* One day's wage earns only one mouth's bread, so that the workman will devour all that he can win, and have nothing for the hungry members of his family.

Bread at eight times its usual value famine prices ! Our first thoughts are for the poor; but the rich as well will have great concern for their luxuries of *" oil and wine"* That the scene is eastern cannot well be denied; nor that the wheat and barley, the oil and the wine, were the leading products of Palestine in the days of John. History tells us how much its inhabitants had reason to be troubled about the means of life in the terrific days of the revolution.

" I will send the pestilence arid also wild beasts among them."

There is one power at least that will mercifully end the sufferings of men. After famine follows *Death*. It will do its work by the sword, by hunger, pestilence, and. by the wild beasts that come down upon depopulated lands and smoking villages. That is the appalling scene that has followed in the wake of every conqueror. It is the witness of what mere brute power can do, — of what brutes men can become when they forget the imperative THOU SHALT of a just and righteous God, and become worshippers of a mere I WILL.

The lesson has often been pressed home on men, that tyrannies can only end in blood and tears; that wealthy indolence, looking down upon the struggles of ignorance and hunger weltering uncared for at its feet, will be torn down from its glittering throne to walk in poverty and rags; that indifference to the will of God must soon become incompatible with the brotherhood of man; and that the final refuge from man's inhumanity to man is death.

Page 44 - *Hades* - And indeed it is a refuge that might well be envied in such miserable days, were it not for a ghastly form that comes behind. The un-illuminated *Hades* of ancient thought meant disembodiment and weakness, judgement without much hope of rest or victory. John can say nothing to redeem this future, for he is dealing with a heathen or pre-Christian world. In all ages, with a universality and persistency that are surprising, men have divined this miserable vision of the future life. Everywhere it has called up fear and trembling, but neither self interest, nor false philosophy has been able to drive this faith from the common heart of man.

"Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together"

But we must turn back for a moment. What has all this to do with John and the infant Church ? Much every way, if John recognizes in this conquering power some fresh assertion of its domination on the part of Rome. Where will this be felt? We cannot hesitate in answering — Jerusalem is still the centre of John's thoughts as she is the sacred centre of the earth; and it must be especially in the chosen land that such dread events will reach their deadliest climax.

John knew that these sweeping calamities were such as God had frequently before employed for the chastisement of his native land. Had not Jehovah said to that ancient prophet who like himself had seen the Throne and Cherubim: ***"I send my four sore judgements upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast" ?***

Page 45 - *Where is the blow to fall ?* - Knowing that the Jews had filled up the cup of their iniquity, until Paul was compelled to say that ***"God's wrath had come upon them to the uttermost,"*** it was scarcely possible to interpret these visions otherwise than as a threatened repetition of the desolations which had befallen Palestine in Ezekiel's time.

"What shall be the sign of thy presence, and of the end of the age ?"

Besides, John had heard Christ asked concerning the destruction of the temple and the end of the Jewish age, and had not forgotten the thrilling answer

"Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars; nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginnings of sorrows."

And here in his apocalyptic visions these identical calamities stand at the head of that series of tribulations amid which the Kingdom of Heaven is born.

That these should come directly from the hand of God and from the Lamb, John well knew. He had by no means mistaken those trenchant parables in which Christ warned the Jews that the consequence of his murder would be the destruction of their political existence and theocratic privileges.

"The Lord of the vineyard will send his armies and miserably destroy those wicked men who slew his Son, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen." "His armies !" — **yes, his armies.** It would be no surprise while it would be a consolation to the Christians of those times that it was not Nero nor Vespasian who was judging Jerusalem.

Page 46 - The Martyrs' Cry - It was God. The punishment would not be sorer than was needed. The wrath of the Lamb would be tempered by all the mercy of his Love; and the day of darkness would surely pass away to usher in a gladder day than the past had ever seen.

"Shall not God avenge his elect ? . . He will avenge them speedily."

Another seal is opened, and a startling picture is unveiled. The scene is in the eternal world but without particular localization. Souls of martyrs are seen **beneath** the altar ON which the Lamb had at first appeared as slain. The symbol seems to signify that their state is one of sacrifice rather than of reward. They are not yet in their resurrection forms, nor in the society of their Lord; but cry aloud as if impatient of God's delay to judge their persecutors. This is indeed a startling revelation; yet clearly it is a reference to the parable recorded in Luke 18.

Our previous discussion of its meaning will enable us to be curt. Our Lord foretold that the time would come when the blood of his Apostles would be shed, and that upon their murderers would come God's great day of revenge, although the vengeance might seem to be long delayed. St. Peter appears to have felt, with a natural impatience, when writing his second epistle, that this avengement had been too long delayed; and explains it by the divine unwillingness to cut short man's period of repentance.

At last, however, the Church is told that the hour is come ! Heaven's patience is worn out: the clouds are gathering for the storm. The spirit-martyrs are to be patient *"for a little time"* until their number is complete. Meanwhile they are given *"white robes"* to signify that their vindication is proceeding from that hour.

Page 47 - The Sinners' Wail - We must take care to read nothing passionate, vindictive, or cruel into the martyrs' cry. The natural man's desire for vengeance is that his enemy shall suffer injury for injury, wrong for wrong, simply to be quits, and without regard to whether vengeance

will yield good results. The spiritual man's desire is that evil shall be checked, that folly and wickedness shall become their own avengers, and wisdom and righteousness involve their own reward.

His cry for vengeance is that justice may put its check on evil; break the power of those tyrannies and falsehoods that withstand the progress of the truth, and thereby hasten on the time when the order and peace of heaven shall prevail.

The personal element cannot, perhaps, be altogether excluded in this case; for when the time is come they will lie no longer beneath the altar, but will be adorned with crowns and palms, and become the envy of coming generations to whom the prize of martyrdom is denied. Even now, in anticipation of the day of victory, they are putting on their festal robes.

***" Your children shall begin to say to the mountains:
Full on us; and to the hills cover us."***

The sixth seal moves towards an answer to the martyrs' prayer. The scene here opened up is simply overwhelming in its grandeur, being no less than the destruction of the physical universe. **Popularly it is not read as a "sign," but taken as science** - an actual astronomical catastrophe. As a matter of fact, ***the days of the Apocalypse were remarkable for their physical portents.***

Page 48 - Heaven shaken - From the close of the reign of Tiberius, 37 AD, earthquakes hardly ceased until the fate of Pompeii and Herculaneum in 79 AD. During Nero's reign, more than **300 cities were demolished by earthquakes**. From Rome to Jerusalem, nature was in one continuous condition of disturbance, and visited with signs of a portentous character. Plainly, however, the reference of this seal is not to a physical demolition of the universe.

Such a blunder is inexcusable. After the catastrophe is past, the earth stands fast in its place; there is still land and sea, trees and grass, unhurt by the commotion, and an abundant population which has not felt the shock ! In the interpretation of prophetic books **we must remember the habits of prophetic thought.**

The **host of heaven was dissolved**, and **heaven rolled away as a scroll** in the day of God's vengeance upon Edom (Isa 34.4). **All the lights of heaven were made dark** when Babylon was destroyed by Media (Isa 13.10), and when the star of Egypt set (Ezek 32.7-8). The same catastrophe took place at the **invasion of locusts in the days of Joel**; and Amos uses the same symbols to portray the impending tribulations of his time. In short, the scene before us is the concrete form in which all prophecy answers the question: ***" Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness***

and not light ? even very dark, and no brightness in it ? " (Amos 5.20.)

There is therefore no excuse for the ignorant fear that conjures up a universe broken up and pulverized. The symbolism is indicative of troubled and revolutionary times, when the ordinary foundations of society are broken up, when old religions perish, the leaders of thought are stricken down, and chaos reigns.

Page 49 - "Weep for Yourself" - The scene of this impending revolution is marked off by our Lord himself in Matt 24.29. It is centred in sacred Judea; and so powerful a fulfillment of the symbol is never again to take place in human history. The actual fact was no whit behind the prophecy. Renan utters no exaggeration when he says that during those days...

" life actually became unbearable;" and " men's minds were kept in a constant state of frenzy" (Les Apotres, 264-6).

No wonder that *the kings, and princes, and chief captains*" (compare Acts 4.26; Mark 6.21) especially, were afraid of what was coming on the land, and that the multitudes were weary of life, and called upon the rocks to fall on them and end their tortures. This imprecation is first heard in Hosea 10.8, when Israel is suffering from the Assyrian invasion.

Christ forewarns *" the daughters of Jerusalem "* that it will be repeated by their children in the dreadful sufferings of the coming Roman desolations; and there can be little doubt that this Apocalyptic scene is intended to be the realization of Christ's prophecy by that very generation that, as children led by their mothers' hands, had heard the fatal warning from his lips.

The striking figures of this picture do no more than justice to the dislocations and terrors of that time in Palestine. The armies of the Lord have appeared, as the people had been warned by the preaching of apostles and evangelists. The powers that rule religion and the state, the sun and stars, are tottering; famine, pestilence, and civil discord are breaking up society, and the land is rocking to its foundations.

Page 50 - Outraged Love - No wonder that multitudes recognize these judgements as God's punishment of their sins, and are tormented with the fear that it may be true that they have actually murdered the Son of God. No fire burns so fierce at last as outraged love.

THE SEALING OF GOD'S ELECT

CHAPTER. 7.

*"Ah Lord God ! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in
thy pouring out of thy fury on Jerusalem ?"*

Page 51 - THE last scene told us that heaven and earth are about to pass away, and a new heaven and a new earth take their place. The picture John now sees is one much needed to pacify his anxious mind; for the question must have started — Amid such convulsions, what is to become of the people of God ? Here he is told by powerful symbols that no breath of wind can blow upon the land until God gives his consent. The four winds of Daniel are apparently political spirits or powers, and these winds must be akin. Violent and reckless as these are, they cannot be allowed to blow until God has first of all secured the safety of his faithful ones.

This scaling scene is suggested from Ezekiel, like so much else in the Apocalypse. That ancient prophet, as a prelude to the Chaldaean devastation of Jerusalem, saw in vision a man clothed in linen go through the city of Jerusalem and mark the foreheads of the men who sighed and cried over her idolatries; the remainder were committed to the sword.

We shall not err in thinking that there is a similar meaning here. God's *"four sore judgements"* are about to break once more upon the land; and to show that these are limited and bounded by Almighty Providence, it is decreed that their vengeance shall not fall on any who are the doers of God's will.

Page 52 - Does Providence, discriminate ? - How often does it seem to us that Providence is a Power without a Conscience ! — a judgement without discrimination — a vengeance that falls alike on all. One thing happeneth alike, we say, to bad and good. Let forth the dogs of war, let famine fill the land, let the pestilence waste at noonday — what respect have they for righteous men? Yea, is it not too frequently the case that the blow falls first upon the righteous man, and that they who escape most deftly are, if anything, the wicked ?

" Streams will not curb their pride

The just man not to entomb,

Nor lightning's go aside to give his virtues room;

Nor is that wind less rough which blows a good man's barge."

Doubtless there is much to perplex us in the daily march of Providence, and we may well at times bewail ourselves and say there is **no favour** for the righteous; but a wider survey and a calmer judgement will discern, sometimes at least, the clearest indications of the presence of a Hand that

shields and saves. Especially in times of critical importance to the Church may the presence of God's angel be discerned, sealing his saints and building round about their persons and their homes a wall of fire through which the Adversary cannot break.

And who are these whom Providence now shields so marvelously ? They are called "*the servants of God,*" and by more particular designation they are "*the tribes of the children of Israel.*" The reference must be either to the whole believing church of Christ, or to the **believing sons of Abraham**. The latter is by every argument to be preferred.

Page 53 - A Remnant shall be Saved - This seal is the fulfillment of an Old Testament promise that Israel shall be gathered from the corners of the earth and preserved in a kingdom that shall never be removed; and also of certain well-known threats, one of which was familiar to every Jew, and may have helped to give this vision its particular form — "*the Lord shall separate unto evil, out of all the tribes of Israel*" (Deut 29); and another better known to the members of the Church, — God will "*gather his wheat into his garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*"

The narrative is then so diluted with a Jewish tincture that it cannot be explained but by referring it to the believing Jewish Church. If the vision had been intended to give comfort to some distant Gentile Church, surely a symbolism would have been chosen not so likely to create perplexity. So definite a particularization of the tribes seems unavoidably to point to the actual Israel of the flesh; and no choice is left to us when we have seen, at so many points, that Palestine as God's land, Jerusalem as his city, the Temple as the centre of his worship, the Jews as his covenant people, are so intimately concerned with the scenes and visions of the Apocalypse. The burden of these impending judgements is to fall on them.

" God did not cast off his people which He foreknew."

In the interval between the ascension of our Lord and the destruction of Jerusalem, the question was never absent from the Jewish mind (alarmed by the threatenings of national destruction so freely uttered by the prophetic Spirit in the Church)

Page 54 - What advantage hath the Jew ? - "*Has God cast away his people ? Is Israel given over to destruction ? Is it not written that Israel is God's everlasting people — that of his Covenant there is no end ?*" Now that the destruction of the Jewish polity seems most imminent, that question presses with a new intensity upon the hearts especially of all Hebrew Christendom.

The answer comes — "*God hath not cast away his people. No faithful soul shall perish in these impending judgements. Out of every tribe a remnant*

will be saved. The holy people will live on: its name never be blotted out. So great will be the tribulation, that except the days be shortened no flesh shall be saved; but for these elects' sake those days shall be shortened, and a multitude out of all the tribes be preserved according to the covenant mercies of our God."

Such is the message which comes to John. **Prophetic assurances of Israel's perpetuity are to be fulfilled**; but the Christian Church is destined to supplant the nation; the Church is organically one with Israel. The holy seed among the covenant people are the first-born of the Church of Christ; and the nucleus around which all its future growth shall cluster. In coming generations of believers, these sons of Abraham will find their true successors, and perpetuate an Israel truly worthy of their fathers' God.

"In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek."

All over Christendom there is a deep felt interest in the future history of the Jews — **a heap of wasted sympathy**. [? Ed PB] Nothing will please but that the Jew must be visited with some magnificent favour in the future development of God's kingdom; so that he shall stand upon the shoulders of the Gentile and lord it over him. [**because of the irrecoverable oath of the LORD the Jew will be grafted as a nation back onto the Olive tree Rom 11:25,26 Ed. PB**]

Page 55 - One Body and one Spirit - The Scriptures give the Jew no pre-eminence beyond that he is first in the field, and has the natural rights of the firstborn son; with the ominous intimation that these are frequently, through unfaithfulness, for ever transferred to the younger. The Pauline answer to this extravagant expectation is one that for ever ends its prospects: — *"In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. He is a Jew who is one inwardly."*

In the broad field of the Gospel, there is no respect of persons. In John's time, we fear that a somewhat bitter struggle existed in the Church between its Jewish and Gentilish elements: a struggle for supremacy. Had it been left to men to settle it, God only knows how it might have ended. Perhaps there was a Providence in the limited number of Jews who entered the Apostolic Church; for if the bulk of Israel had been converted, the chances seem that circumcision and other Jewish rites would have been maintained and made compulsory, so as to give the Jew that primacy of rank in the Church which many Christians seem anxious to bestow upon him at this day. However, God settled it by Titus; and finished it beyond recall by Hadrian. The Jew was to have no special pre-eminence henceforth in the Church of God.

This settlement of the question is plainly pre-intimated in this book, the vision of a nameless multitude out of *"every nation and people and tongue."*

There is much need for the caution given to interpreters by the question of the Elder : " *Who are these ?* " It comes readily to the lips to say — " the Church in heaven," — the vision is so pure and beautiful. In fact, the favourite answer is, that this is a vision of the heavenly Church; with some, the Church of the early centuries; and with others, the Church after the consummation of all things.

Page 56 - Through the Great Tribulation - Every interpretation which makes it the Church in heaven at any period is egregiously astray - It makes a violent and needless dislocation of the order of the visions. Why, the Apocalyptic martyrs are not yet in heaven, but waiting in a state of sacrifice. As a vision of heaven, it would contradict the vision of the sealed believers — a minority of the Church preserved, but a numberless multitude given over to be destroyed, though compensated by heavenly glory !

How much happier to see in it really a supplementary vision to the first. God's Jewish people are preserved at the focus of the storm; and is it to be imagined that God's Providence is less careful of his Gentile Christians ? Is the Apostolic Church exclusively Jewish, or is it a more eclectic gathering as becomes that God who is not the God of the Jew alone, but of the Gentile also ? (Rom 3.29). And there is the splendid answer in this white robed and rejoicing multitude.

They, like their Jewish compeers (and they now together form one delightful company) have come through *great tribulation*. The "*hour of trial*" intimated to three of the Apocalyptic churches as "*about to come*," is here *in vision* past. Great multitudes have struggled through those dark and dreadful hours — under the shadow of God's wing. Their *palms* are the indications of their victory. Their "*white robes*" are the proof that like Sardis they have stood faultlessly the brunt of Satan's onset, by the ardour of their devotion to the Lamb who died for them.

Page 57 - The Church to be triumphant - Their place *before the throne of God* (ethical not local) is symbolical of their nearness and clearness to God; they are the people of his Presence, the pillars of his new temple, God's Kings and Priests; the chosen ones that dwell henceforth in that Jerusalem which is the throne of the Lord (Jer 3.17). In short, we stand at that point of sacred history when the middle wall of partition is broken down; and the Gentile becomes fellow-heir with the believing Jew of all the special privileges of the elect of God. Here henceforth is God's chosen Israel.

The beautiful pastoral idyll in which their simple joys are described seems too pure and hallowed for this earth. These delights are, however, just such as were promised to the Asiatic churches if victorious — that

kingdom of God in the heart which is ***"righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit."*** Indeed, it is Isaiah who is the author of these images of serene delight. Even in his earthly Utopian Jerusalem he expected the Lord to spread his pavilion, and be ***" a covert from the storm and rain;"*** to save them from hunger and thirst, and lead them like a shepherd unto living springs; and to multiply to his waiting people ***"the breasts of his consolations."***

These experiences may seem too exalted to be enjoyed on earth; but beyond all question they were the everyday anticipations of the Prophets and Apostles of God's ancient Church. Have we not all known saints whose earthly experience was not excelled by the raptures of this white-robed multitude ?

The vision must have wiped away all tears, for a time at least, from the eyes of John; for it indicates that the Church of Christ will do for Israel and the world even more than was spoken by the Prophets of the ancient Word. At all events, the vision is delightful to the Principalities and Powers around the throne in heavenly places.

Page 58 - Joy in Heaven - The song of the triumphant Church is caught up and echoed by them as it floats in to the ear of God. What a splendid picture of responsive sympathy and joy filling the hearts of all the holy universe of God ! How far the angelic heavens seem, to our dim sight, to be removed from this dull and sinful earth ! Yet not so far. ***" There is joy in heaven over every sinner that repenteth."***

When great multitudes of the nations ascribe their blessedness to God and to the Lamb, the angel heavens break out into sympathetic and triumphant song. The victory seems to be their own. What a revelation of unselfish love as filling every heart, and binding all the worlds of God in one. There is no trace here of that Satanic spirit which rejoices in its own exclusiveness when set high apart in isolated glory ! They rejoice to see Mercy triumphing over sin, Salvation reaching forth its mighty arms to grasp multitudes from every nation under heaven.

THE SEVENTH SEAL, WITH ITS TRUMPET JUDGEMENTS

CHAPTER 8.

" These are the days of vengeance, when all things written must be fulfilled."

Page 59 - THIS silence in heaven is a moment of deep suspense before the august events about to be unfolded — "***the calm before the lightning storm.***" Seven Angels prepare to sound seven trumpets. Meanwhile, a scene of deep significance transpires. We see the prayers of the saints ascending up to God from a censer in the angel's hand; and then the fire of the altar is thrown from the censer to the earth, and causes thunders, lightning's, and earthquakes.

Already we have been told that the loudest cry of the Church is the groan of her martyred saints: "***How long, O Lord, is thy judgement of the earth to be deferred ?***" Already these saints have been told to wait "***a little while;***" and now this fire thrown from the censer is the sign that their prayers are bringing vengeance down upon the earth. The Lord will indeed avenge them *speedily*. *Judgement* is a portion of his saving mission, for He "***came to cast fire upon the land,***" and even in the days of his flesh it was "***already kindled.***"

Page 60 - As Jericho - Thus are we continually reminded that the time occupied in the drama of the book "***is short.***"

" The Son of Man shall send forth, his angels with a great sound of a trumpet."

The seven trumpets, then, are the FINAL elements of vengeance which fall upon the race that has rejected God and embroiled its hands in the blood of his witnesses.

The judgement process takes this form to remind us of the graphic and powerful story of the sixth of Joshua. There we read that the sounding of seven trumpets was the herald of the falling of the walls of Jericho, as the first security for the ultimate possession of the promised land. We are come to a similar crisis in the history of the newer Israel. For forty years the Church has been enduring hardships in the wilderness, but now will have a signal token given to her that she shall finally possess the promised land, the universal earth. Another city is to fall, and its fall is a triumphant Gospel victory.

It follows as matter of course that this new Jericho, which stands in the way of the progress of the truth, must fall soon. If, as so many imagine, these trumpets are sounded over a period of 1500 years, with as many as

700 between some of them, and are to transpire on fields continents apart, what sign can that be to the Apostolic Church, or indeed to any generation of Christians? Diffusiveness destroys intensity; is waste of power, and never commands attention. Accordingly, *all seven angels are prepared to sound at once*. That speaks to haste, to close succession, to repeated blows, while the predecessor is still felt. And such must be our reading to maintain consistency with the statements of the book. John is to tell the churches of things *"which must shortly come to pass."* This hour of tribulation was *"about to come."* The weary martyrs are only to rest *"a little while"* until their prayer is granted.

Page 61 - As Sodom and Egypt - Therefore the trumpets can cover only a brief season; and must be found fulfilled in the days of John. Certainly there was no delay.

*"The Lord will make thy plagues wonderful; . . .
and He will bring upon thee again all the diseases of Egypt."*

"The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast into the land."

A glance over the four plagues of this chapter at once recalls to memory the plagues of Egypt, and the judgement upon Sodom; and John especially must have noticed the correspondence. Now if we are concerned at all with the question — On what portion of the earth are these four plagues to fall ? we have but to ask, whether John gives us any indication of what land he would reckon as equivalent to Sodom and Egypt ?

If we can determine this point, it will save us from the mistake of seeking in the desolating inroads of Huns and Goths, in the advent of Mohammed, in Saracenic armies, in Turkish Pashas, and in the wild French Revolution, with other events of modern times, the fulfillment of a prophecy which was limited by the Seer to a definite space and an apportioned time.

Fortunately we have the statement of John himself. For once let us anticipate. Turn to chap 11.8, and you read — *"And their dead bodies lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified."* We have only to remember that Jerusalem often stands for Palestine, as Berlin stands for Germany, Rome for Italy, Constantinople for the Turkish Empire, and it becomes apparent that the CENTRE of the scene where these Apocalyptic plagues transpire (whatever may be their circumference) is that so-called **"holy land,"** which, by its incurable infidelity and wickedness, has become as hateful in God's sight as Sodom and Egypt in the days of old.

Page 62 - The house of bondage - If then we see that these calamities are centred in the holy land, we can derive there from a lesson of no small significance. The nation which has been exalted unto heaven can be cast down unto hell. The elect of the present may be the reprobate of the future. God puts no nation in a supreme place that will not do supreme work, and God keeps no nation in supreme places that will not meet the supreme duty of the hour. If the chosen clay is spoiled upon the wheel, the Potter will shape it for a different destiny.

This evil fate is anticipated by St. Paul in the Romans, where he hints that Pharaoh's judgements may be in store for Israel. Was not that a hidden intimation that the Jew had become the oppressor of God's true Israel; that he more than any other, held the infant Church in bondage, and like Pharaoh must be smitten that God's people may go free ? Thus certainly reads history.

The early Christian Church was for years the convenient appendage of Judaism. Its truths were narrowed by Jewish limitations; its offices claimed for men of Jewish blood, its liberty chained by the cramped spirit of the Jew; altogether, it was enslaved in the grip of that Jerusalem which ***"gendereth to bondage."***

Besides, the Jew outside the Church was the most active opponent of the Gospel. Everywhere he was fierce and intolerant in his opposition to the rising' faith. The Roman and the Greek ***"cared for none of those things,"*** nor as yet had differentiated between the Christian and the Jew.

Page 63 - Climax of Jewish Sin - The Jew well understood that the religion of his fathers was fighting for its life, and everywhere rose in massive opposition to the Cross. Being amongst the most astute of men, wealthy and managing, custodians of the public purse as money lenders in all the thriving cities of the empire, they had no difficulty in harassing the preachers of the Gospel.

They hired the idlers and the ragamuffins of the cities to hoot and stone the evangelists; bribed magistrates and officers to imprison and persecute. Well does Paul say, ***" These Jews are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins always; but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."*** (1Thess 2.15). It is no fancy, then, that the Jew was to the infant Christian Church what Egypt had been to the infant Mosaic Church; and we need not be astonished that Egypt's plagues should be repeated on those who are now repeating Egypt's cruel and oppressive policy.

"As on Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, after the same manner it shall be in the day that the Son of Man is revealed."

The first four trumpet plagues are then the heralds of blighting desolations that are to fall upon this garden of the Lord. They seem constructed especially to remind the reader that there was about to be a final and complete fulfillment of the terrible threats in Deut 28 and 29. Moses warns the covenant people to take heed lest their hearts turn away from the Lord their God, lest there should be ***"a root among them that bears gall and wormwood."***

Page 64 - The fruitful land made desolate - Then the desolations of Egypt will be repeated; and he that comes from afar will ***" see the plagues of the land and the sickness wherewith the Lord hath made it sick; and that the whole land thereof is brimstone and salt, and a burning that is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth thereon like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger and in his wrath."*** Let any one be at the pains to compare the Palestine of the days of Christ, with its abundant population, its fruitful soil, its teeming waters, and profitable commerce, and the Palestine of the last eighteen centuries with its desolated forests, ruined villages, dried brooks, waterless wells, silted up harbours, salt and rainless fields, and he may well exclaim — ***"Truly a fearful commentary on the first four trumpet visions."***

That the calamities of these trumpets did actually befall Palestine in the days of John need not be said ***"The soil,"*** says Rabbi Johanan, who escaped from Jerusalem during the siege, ***" has been transformed, and the formerly rich fields and pastures are for the most part become barren waste."*** Open the page of Josephus (Wars, B. iii. c. 10) and read that as the struggle raged along the coast — ***" The sea was bloody a long way;"*** and that later in the war

" one might see the Sea of Galilee all bloody and full of dead bodies, and the shores full of shipwrecks; insomuch that the misery was not only the object of commiseration to the Jews but to those that hated them and had been the authors of that misery."

We can easily understand that, in the midst of the unparalleled calamities of those days, the waters of life were turned to bitterness, and the day was very dark.

Page 65 - Day turned into Night - In such an hour, religion is man's supremest solace, and there is no help but in God. Alas, here religion is only a source of bitterness and contention, of confusion and shame. As time passed on, repeated calamity waked up fearful questionings, and faith was perishing. Was this God in whom their fathers trusted not a dream — a myth like so many of the gods of the surrounding nations ? What certainty was there of his existence ? How could He be the God of Israel, and stand idly by to see his people crushed between the upper and

nether millstones of plundering religious factions and invading Roman armies? Thus does the sun of Israel's day grow dark. They can discern no brightness in its shining, or feel anything of its life imparting warmth. The moon, too, shines with an ominous diminution of her lustre.

The Church itself is waning in its influence, growing dark and enigmatical, less and less able to inspire the failing hopes of a mourning people. The priests are no longer men of light and leading, able to interpret the voice of heaven, and reflect the mind of God. The very stars are dark — Scribes and Rabbis, the astutest politicians and interpreters of prophetic lore, can shed no more light upon the national question than the most ignorant tillers of the soil.

Less and less have they to say upon the problems of the hour, and soon will cease to guide at all. Deplorable condition ! No light from heaven — no love on earth. God failing men, silent or only answering, as Josephus tells us, in the prodigious storms of rain, thunder, and lightning, with amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth, which now and then filled Jerusalem with midnight terrors, as the awakened consciences of the people interpreted them of "*some grand calamities that were coming upon men.*" (Wars, iv. 4, 5)

Page 66 - Other Woes to follow - Great as such sufferings are, they are by no means the greatest of all woes. Indications are abroad and visible to such men as John, that in a national collapse, the transition of an age, the judgement of a people who have been exalted up to heaven and are to be cast down unto hell, there are greater sufferings still to follow.

" Woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the land by reason of the other voices of the trumpets which are yet to sound"

THE TRUMPET JUDGEMENTS CONTINUED

CHAPTER 9

" Tribulation such as hath not. been, from the beginning of the world until now; no, nor ever shall be."

Page 67 - FOUR angels have sounded their trumpets and the earth has been stunted of its produce, commerce has been paralyzed, war has stained the seas with blood, bitterness has been infused into all the natural joys of life, and religious faith has declined until the light of life has become almost as dark as night. But the abyss of woe has not yet been fathomed, and it must be touched.

The fifth angel sounds - Thereupon, John sees not *a falling star*, but a star which *before had fallen* to the earth. *To him was given the key of the bottomless pit.* The star apparently represents some religious power, stands for a fallen heavenly light. The prevalent interpretation of this trumpet is that this star is Mohammed, the smoke Mohammedanism, the locusts are the Saracens, the crowns of gold are their turbans, and the tails which sting are the horse-tails of their standards. We shall see, as we proceed, whether this view will stand the test. Meanwhile, why should we leap forward into history more than 500 years beyond the time of John ? We have come upon no indication whatever that John is not still telling his fellow servants of *"things that must shortly come to pass."*

Page 68 - The Fallen Star - If an author tells me that he is to delineate events in close proximity to his times, surely it is a gross perversion to carry his words forward into history 500 years.

At any rate Mohammed could not possibly be this star, because he never was a heaven-fixed star giving light upon the earth; much less did he fall by unfaithfulness to his commission. Nor did Mohammed ever hold the key of the bottomless abyss, any more than he ever held the key of heaven. This fallen star looks to be the truth of God perverted into falsehood — an exalted privilege abused — good converted into evil. For this reason, the star cannot be Nero (Macdonald). It might be Satan — only, as Gebhardt remarks, *"the king of the abyss is to be distinguished from the star."*

The best interpretation we have seen is that of Maurice, who takes it to be the Jewish people as a society set apart to witness for a true and righteous God. If we are at liberty to say that this people transformed the Word of God into an authority for false and evil principles, would not such a description as we have here be verified ? Would not such a perversion of the truth of God be an opening of the bottomless pit to let out upon society every dark and noisome plague ?

What other than abyssmal inspirations could float up through minds "*that have turned their backs towards heavenly purity and light, and plunged deeper and deeper into darkness with no other than the false lights of self-love's lustful fires and vile emotions guiding them away from all that is good and true*?" Were these Jews not such a society of men ?

Page 69 - The Prophetic Gift abused - Entrusted with "*the oracles of God,*" were they not a light shining in the heaven; and were they not by this time fallen from their high position to the earth — to the very dust of selfish worldliness ?

"From the prophets of Jerusalem, is profaneness gone forth into all the land."

The above interpretation is a key that fits the lock with fair precision, and we are loathe to meddle with it. Yet on the whole we think the key would move more sweetly in its wards if the star were interpreted not as the Jewish people but rather as the distinctive prophetic gift or office imparted to that people to give light on earth.

Israel's prophetic light, once so glorious in its splendour, became a fallen star. The prophets lied, the people loved to have it so — then divine inspiration ceased. Prophecy, in its fallen and degraded forms of magic, augury, divination, and enchantment (to which the Jewish people took with greed), opened the gates of the abyss to belch out every sort of demoniac inspiration, and fostered gross delusions which ultimately lashed their victims with the stings of scorpions. "*The prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail.*"

This bottomless pit is **unbelief**. When Judaism lost its divine illumination it became a fountain of corruption. Clinging to the form of godliness, it lost more and more the power; and when at length the land was seen smoldering in the fires of judgement, what did that seem to witness but that the God of Israel was as much a myth as Jupiter and Apollo, and other farcical gods of Greece and Rome. To what other end could a people come of whom Christ was compelled to say, "*Ye have both seen and hated both me and my father.*"

Now, what is this we see ? **Smoke as the smoke of a great furnace darkening the very heavens**. When the pit of godlessness is opened up, volumes of darkness come belching out of its unfathomable depths.

Page 70 - Smoke and locusts from the Pit - The infernal vapours of false, bad passions obscure almost totally what is godlike and divine. All error is an obscuration of the light of truth; but by moral infidelity the sun of heaven is blotted out, and there is nothing left for us but a burning fiery furnace of destruction in the depth, and a world hideous with gloom

because all joy and light have gone. Yes, life is dark when there is no God, or only a God that has abandoned us; when there is no brotherhood on earth, no Father of the race in heaven: no home with a loving immortality to shelter our naked souls.

Worse than the darkness which makes day hideous is *a plague of locusts* from the pit. The imagery here is modelled on the plague of locusts in the book of Joel. Whether that prophet was referring to a literal plague of locusts or to an army trampling down the land in its victorious march, expositors cannot tell. Certainly the figure might well be applied to an invading military host; and so John's locusts are by some applied to the Saracenic armies who marched under the banner of Islam. Such an application of the figure is not lawful here.

These locusts "*are not to hurt grass, nor any green thing, nor any tree.*" Is it possible to imagine the march of barbaric armies without destruction to the fields and tillage of invaded towns and hamlets? These locusts are *not to hurt those who are sealed of God*. Is it possible that those Mohammedan invaders sweeping impetuously along on a crusade of conversion, would pass by every Christian and leave him unhurt? — would not their hatred be the bitterest where men's faith in Christ was staunch and uncompromising?

Is it possible that the commission given to those warlike hordes was "*not to kill men,*" even Christ-less men, but only to *hurt them for five months*; that the men oppressed by them would *seek death and not find it*? No more express intimation could be given that these locusts are no human power, and least of all victorious Mohammedan armies.

Page 71 - Heathen "Schwarmerei" - What, then, are these swarming beastly forms that wound men *like a scorpion when it strikes*? Their origin contains the answer. Open the abyss of unbelief and godlessness — what swarms of low, crawling, sensuous thoughts invade the mind to consume the tender blade or early shoot of goodness that may yet exist! "*They are like horses prepared unto the battle*" — fierce, desperate, impassioned, warlike.

Ever boastful and pretentious, they look as if they were to fight man's battles and make him victorious over evil; but the more specious their pretences, the more bitterly they deceive and wound. *On their heads are imitation crowns of gold*. Infidel imaginings, magical incantations, full of sensuous vigour, come with kingly pretensions to their dupes. "*Follow us, and we shall bring you better times. The earth is ours and we shall reign over it.*"

But the actual significance of their crowns is that a godless spiritualism,

equally with a godless materialism, is a tyrant where it rules — a source of torment rather than of blessing. *"Their faces were as men's"*

Those lying dreams from the abyss pretend to be divine, but are only reflections of man's own thoughts, the birth of his own restless passions; and when they come to rule him with a regal sway, their influence is accursed and there is only torment for their victims.

Page 72 - Fierce yet Effeminate - *"And they had hair as the hair of women,"* though they had *the teeth of lions*. Their aspect is largely warlike; and there is a commotion as if preparing for war. A true description of mingled sensuality and superstition when emboldened by a temporary ascendancy. Let them once attain to power, and whatever be the soft airs they assume, the indulgences they offer, the pledges given that sensuous loves are half divine, and subject to no law, they are beastly destructive powers —

"Like to Furies, like to Graces;"

difficult to subdue when once encased in their hell forged armour — pretentious in their claims, but able to carry on only a mimic warfare against the truth and light of God.

Such are the locusts from the pit. Sensual reasoning's, strengthened by heathenish superstitions, all the spawn of hell, inspired with deadly hatred of, and pouring out their venom on, all that is pure and heavenly. Shielded by the imperviousness of their materialism to spiritual light, they seem to themselves to be an army of gigantic warriors, while mere pigmies seen in the light of heaven. Swarming forth from the nether pit which a decadent faith and a perverted gift have opened up, threatening to destroy all goodness, they will have only a temporary triumph — indeed, will rather hasten than hinder the advent of heaven's kingdom.

This sensuous invasion has power to hurt *men for five months*. The time allotted is perhaps of no marked significance, as it is the usual period of a locust plague; and yet it is remarkable that it marks the most terrific period of Jewish delusion, disorder, and mental agony — the five months siege of Jerusalem.

Page 73 - The Reign of Chaos - From all this mental stupefaction and stinging torment of disappointed hopes, *the sealed of God were free*. They were not in the darkness and delusion of the smoke of the pit. The end was declared from the beginning; and in the knowledge of God's purposes, they shook the dust of the city from off their feet, and fled.

Josephus tells us at great length how the city came to be like hell let loose on earth; and not so much from Roman arms as from the brutal passions and infernal feuds of its deluded populace. The god worshipped in those

months was not JEHOVAH the Creator, and sustainer of all life and beauty, but ABADDON the Genius of Destruction.

***" Lo ! thy dread empire, Chaos ! is restored :
Light dies before thy uncreating word:
Thy hand, great Anarch, lets the curtain fall,
And universal darkness buries all."***

No wonder that in such times of calamity and distress, with the powers of heaven all shaken, the order of society broken up, with mutual faith and trust destroyed, hunger and pestilence raging in the streets, the clamour of war around the walls, and hearts stung with the arrows of a reproving conscience, — no wonder that men sought for death, to end the bitterness of a life that had become intolerable. Death, you might say is easily found of them that seek it. Yes, but such men as these as carefully shrink from death as they eagerly long for it.

Conscience makes cowards of them all; and while seeking death, they still would rather bear the ills they have than fly to others that they know not of. Oh, if death were only sure to be annihilation, the extinction of all hated memories, the negation of all future pains, then death would be utterly desirable.

Page 74 - Fire, Smoke, and Brimstone - But who can assure them of this immunity from the judgement of a righteous God ? Such death, such deep forgetfulness they cannot find.

One woe is past, but another is about to fall. *A sixth angel sounds*, and a voice is heard from between the horns of the golden altar. Mark that it is still the day and dispensation of the altar in Israel; but now the altar is no sign of reconciliation but of judgement proceeding to extremity. The prayer of the martyrs is hastening to accomplishment.

***" Wickedness burnerth as a fire; the people also are as the fuel of fire;
no man spareth his brother"***

The *four angels on the Euphrates are let loose* and there comes upon the scene an army of 200,000,000 horsemen. A number of preterist expositors find here a reference to the Eastern troops (Roman and Parthian) that were marched and concentrated upon Palestine at the outbreak of the war; and the angels are either the four Roman legions or the four Eastern kings mentioned by Josephus as coming to the conquest of the land. This might possibly supply a frame work for the vision; but is very far from realizing the pith of what John sees.

We must remember always that these visions seem intended to gather up all the prophetic utterances of the Old Testament anent ***"the day of the***

Lord," and thus teach us that in the events about to happen **ALL THE SCRIPTURE IS TO FULLFILLED** — the ideal judgement day be realized, and the ideal kingdom of God ushered in that *time* "*whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began;*" and which Peter localises ay to date when he says to those before him "*they told of THESE days.*" Acts 3.21,24.

Page 75 - The hot Simoom - The judgement before us having its issues in the altar in front of God reminds us of the Psalm "*the Lord is in his holy temple: upon the wicked He shall rain snares* (*pachim*, but possibly it should read *pecham*, coals), *fire, and brimstone, and burning wind.*"

The physical picture called up here is the hot, blasting, all destroying **simoom**, a favourite image of divine anger with the Prophets. Isaiah invokes an overwhelming judgement upon Assyria in similar terms: "*The Lord cometh from afar burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke, his lips are full of indignation, his tongue as a devouring fire, and his breath . . . like a stream of brimstone.*"

Jeremiah is very bold, and turns this flame of judgement on Jerusalem: "*A hot wind from the bare heights in the wilderness, not to fan nor to cleanse. Behold, He shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as the whirlwind; his horses are swifter than eagles.*" The vision of St. John then points to some invasion that like the hot blast of **the simoom** shall burn and scorch until desolation reigns.

The Euphratean country might well be chosen as the source of this un-human raid. **The simoom was an eastern wind.** The enemies of the ancient Church 'hailed mostly from the East — the Scythian, Assyrian, and Babylonian especially — descending like evil beasts from the neighbourhood of this great stream.

But ere O.T. history closes, those enemies have disappeared; they have been judged and cast down to hell. There, where formerly was the river of Paradise, was now as the Prophets had said, a wilderness whose streams are pitch and dust of brimstone, whose ruins are the resort of the wild beast, and the Satyr, the habitations of spectres and devils of darkness (Isa 34).

Page 76 - The Euphratean Host - When then from the Euphrates region there comes up this unnatural host like the hot blast of the simoom, it is to signify the invasion of this once holy and blessed land, by all the taint of heathenism, and by all the scorpion power of hell. The boundary of God's ancient kingdom is assaulted — taken at the rush — wiped clean out. The difference between Zion and Babel is no more, for Zion has renounced her calling and her God, and must be left to be devoured by the demons she has worshipped.

This terrible breakdown had not been unforeseen. Of that day and hour knew no man, not even the angels of heaven; but it. was all in the purposes of God — "*the hour and day, and month and year*" — known with the utmost exactitude by Him who never precipitates his judgements in his anger, nor delays them needlessly by his long-suffering mercy.

The martyrs and the living saints had thought the cup of iniquity to be full, and wearied for this vengeance; they had thought to hurry the day by their prayers; but the hand of God will not be forced, yet the prayers of his people will be answered. And so, a trampling host of desolating powers are let loose upon the land to sweep it like the hot simoom.

"The land in full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence."

Over the land rolled the hot sulphureous blast. "*THE third part of men was killed.*" The population of Palestine is reckoned to have been from four to five millions; and the accepted estimate of life destroyed is one million and a half.

Page 77 - The Reign of Terror - A fearful holocaust ! — the work of heathen passions, breaking out into heathen violence and brutality, such as many good men can only explain to themselves on the supposition that the Jewish people got to be possessed by a host of demons from the abyss whose purpose was to make a hell on earth. No more sickening tale of covetousness, impurity, madness, and fratricidal strife can be found in the annals of history. Those scenes were but very faintly parodied in the seven years' struggle of the French Revolution.

There too atheism and irresponsible brutality were enthroned; and there too contentious strife and devilry became supreme, and Frenchmen shed their brother's blood as if it had been filthy water. Break down this boundary line between the spiritual and the sensual, the kingdom of God's wisdom and man's natural desires ; profane all that is sacred; and whatever be the arts and culture of the people, you will have the same result.

Where heaven does not reign hell will. When the fear of God has perished and men become self-idolaters, there is no fiendishness too subtle for imagination or too brutal to be executed against other men. All the wisdom of those in power is low, sensual, crawling in the dust; and when cunning fails, they strike and kill.

It is the Reign of Terror. Fire and brimstone are the implements by which *Eternity* is made terrible: it were well for us to remember that God does sometimes kindle Tophet here. The fiery sufferings that are seen to follow sin, and lick up the grace and joy of life like oil, are the breath of Jehovah, a stream of brimstone prepared against the hour and the day; and that fire

must burn until the pile on which it feeds is turned to smoke and dust. *"Our God is a consuming fire."*

Page 78 - They repented not - Strong and loud as were these trumpet calls to repentance, the residue of men remained unchanged; enamoured of their falsities even while tormented by them. They cannot see the connection between their miseries and their apostasy from God.

Outwardly indeed they give God honour; inwardly they bow to idols. Possibly they persuade themselves that worship condones wickedness; or that by their wickedness they are the more devoutly serving Him. However it be, the light that is in them is as darkness; and since they will not repent there is no resource to a righteous God but to go forward with yet severer judgements until not only the Euphrates has been passed but utterly dried up — not only the walls of Jericho been shaken but utterly thrown down.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD FINISHED

CHAPTER 10.

"The Mystery of Christ which in other generations was not made known"

Page 79 - AT this point there is an interruption of the trumpet blasts, in order to offer a needful explanation. John sees an angel of conspicuous dignity descending on the earth. A favourite supposition is that Michael, the angel prince of Israel, is intended. More probably it is Christ. As such, John describes although he does not name Him; and appropriately so, for He is veiled in clouds. It is Paul's doctrine verified — *"The Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God."*

Events are nearing the boundary line between the old age and the new; the Lord is *"coming in his kingdom"*; already his foot is on the land and on the sea — the token of his; claim to universal dominion; and the last trump waits his word to bring the old world to an end. The **little book open in his hand** indicates that only a little remains now to be revealed, so far as his leading purpose is concerned. The **spoken thunders** are, however, ominous of further and severer judgements, and John is able to interpret them; but apparently they bespeak some judgement which lies out of the line of present purposes, and are not to be explained as yet.

Page 80 - No delay - Doubtless they will be unfolded to us in the proper sequence of events, and in the usual strong symbolism of this book. The story of God's ancient people is not yet complete; with that only are we now concerned.

"A short work will the Lord make of it."

Meanwhile, the angel has lifted up his hand to heaven, and sworn that *"time shall be time no longer"* These words have not infrequently been misunderstood. Sometimes they are said to mean that time shall at this point cease to be, and eternity begin; and again, they are interpreted as saying that a certain period of time, defined to be $1111\frac{1}{9}$ years, shall not quite elapse (Bengel, adopted by Wesley), bringing down the period of its terminus to 1836. All such notions become fantastic before the evident meaning of the words, as given by Alford: — *"there shall be no longer a lapse of time — time shall no longer intervene;"* or more directly, as in the margin of the Revised Version, and recommended by the American Committee for the text, *"there shall be delay no longer"*

And what is the occasion of this very solemn protest ? It looks back to the fact that the judgements of the preceding trumpets have been ineffectual in the production of repentance; and possibly have left their victims in a state more reprobate and hopeless than before.

Then, "*why should they be stricken any more ? Will they not revolt yet more and more ?*" It may be so, yet for many reasons the work of judgement must proceed. The martyrs beneath the altar will find the promise kept — "*Rest yet for a little time.*" That little time is now about completed.

Page 81 - The Mystery of God - The climax of vengeance is at hand. If the Judge has seemed to be not listening to the supplication of his claimants it is because He is exceeding merciful and not willing that the day of grace should be unduly shortened. But where punishment after punishment has signally failed to soften, and they who have felt "*the terrors of the Lord*" have only the more fixedly clung to their superstitions and crimes, what remains for it but to hasten on that act of doom which will at least vindicate the righteousness of God, and cleanse the earth of a false and obnoxious system ?

" My name shall be great among the Gentiles."

Let us not suppose, however, that the saints of God can cry for any merely bloody triumph, any merely personal vengeance upon their persecutors; or that God would pledge himself to be the instrument of such destructive passion. Both are impossible.

The saints are to be avenged by *the bringing of God's mystery to an end*; that is, the coming into the light of full accomplishment (according to God's meaning), of all the messages spoken by the prophets, especially those grand evangelical intimations that had been the hope and yet the puzzle of all bygone generations. That had been the subject of bitter disputes between those early martyrs and their persecutors, as witness the case of Stephen. The battle between the Judaic and Christian schools raged round the question — "*How is God going to fulfill those Old Testament promises of a Messianic kingdom ?*" Jewish scholasticism gave an answer that glorified the temple, the law, and the blood of Abraham ! The answer of the martyrs was —

Page 82 - The Martyrs Vindicated - "*Messiah will be a suffering priest, a lamb of sacrifice for the sins of the world. He will break down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile; abolish the ceremonial law, and bring all nations into the obedience of faith. In his day no land or city will be holier than another; no race will pride itself upon its favouritism with heaven, for in every mountain God's name shall be honoured and his praise ascend to heaven.*"

The core of the conflict was Jewish localism against Christian universalism; and, in the intense hatred of a religion which seemed to despoil him of his glory, the Jew sprang at the Christian's throat, as if that would save his grand inheritance. When those martyrs who had felt the sting of Jewish venom cried for vengeance, they were crying for the

triumph of their principles, for the plain and manifest vindication of the truth for which they died — the truth that Palestine was no more *the* holy land — Judaism no longer a living and authoritative revelation of God's will — the Temple no longer the *one* place where God could be approached with acceptable worship — the kingdom of the Jews no longer synonymous with the Kingdom of Heaven !

That vindication is the only vengeance allowable to the saint; and it is on the eve of being given to those supplicants. Judaism, as an official system is hastening to its close; "*an end is being made of the holy people,*" as predicted by Daniel; an obstructive Church which has ceased indeed to be a Church is being speedily reduced to nothingness by the successive sounding of the trumps of doom; a dispensation utterly corrupt, and refusing to advance along God's line of march, must needs be devastated and destroyed to make way for a higher and purer dispensation of the grace of God !

Page 83 - The Bitterness of Good News - Oh, how incredible it must have seemed that a people so exalted of God should come to so miserable an end ! No wonder that the angel feels it needful *to lift his hand to heaven*, and make a solemn attestation that it shall be so ! Yes, when the angel who **IS ABOUT TO SOUND** shall utter his mighty voice, then, even while the echo is in our ears, the walls of this once sacred Jericho shall fall, and the newer Israel will march straight forward into its possession. John is now ordered to take the little book *and eat it*.

The knowledge of the contents of this book, which concerned the finishing of the mystery of God, was pleasing to his first perceptions, but painful to his human sympathies on further contemplation. Jeremiah had the same experiences — "*Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.*" But afterwards, when he discovered that his predictions implied the desolation of his people, his patriotism found expression in passionate lamentation — "*Behold, see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow. My bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth for the destruction of the daughter of my people.*"

The same experience befell Ezekiel, and at the destruction of his people he "*sighed with the breaking of his loins, and with bitterness.*" Surely when John is made to repeat the experience of these older prophets, it is an indication that his circumstances are identical. He is to read and inwardly digest what must needs cause joy because it promises redemption to the world, but must as well be painful to his "*bowels of mercies,*" his brotherly compassions; for the book concerns above all men on earth, "*his kinsmen according to the flesh,*" for whom, like Paul, he could have wished to be accursed from Christ, if thereby he could save them for the service of God.

Page 84 - A Barren Tree - Long-expected as was this denouement, perhaps John had hoped to the very end for some happy compromise in which Jerusalem, the joy of all the land, would still be saved the ravages of her cruel foe, and Judaism harmonised with the spirituality and universality of the gospel. Now, every hope is gone. Her days are numbered; the seventh trumpet is about to sound; and with the reverberation of its notes, the outward signs of Hebrew greatness — her temple, her self government, her priesthood, and her capital will pass away.

"Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?"

A solemn lesson this for all coming ages. Every institution of God or man is daily being tried upon its merits. No nation is impervious to the judgements that test its deepest foundations, and determine whether it is worthy of a place in history. No church, no sect, no dispensation, even if it be the Christian, can boast of its immunity from the possibility of decay and death. God only hath immortality.

The best things can become corrupt, and the corruption of the best is the filthiest and most noxious. The Lord will not acknowledge any Church as his out of which his truth has perished; and if it should become a buttress of ancient tyrannies or of class distinctions, and a gilder of worldliness and sin with the glitter of respectability, no matter that it has been once a Church of God, — against it will go forth those thunderbolts of judgement which will level it with the ground. It is in vain for men to say of their Churches or their sects

Page 85 - A Larger Prophetic Outlook - *"The Lord hath set his love upon Us — the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we!" For such was Israel. Yet He who said that she was "engraven on the palms of his hands,"* had also in the course of time to say —

"O Jerusalem, thy house is left unto thee desolate."

There is no decree of perseverance for Saint or Church, unless they persevere. It is a whole some lesson for individuals and communities. If Christ be not in us we are reprobate. Void of the righteous spirit, we are worthless branches on whom devouring fire shall fall.

John is not allowed to linger in unhappy contemplation. He is called to work. *"Thou must prophesy again concerning many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings"* Is not this another proof added to the many that John has been prophesying hitherto, mainly of *one* nation, and *one* people: painting tragic pictures of the dying struggle of an ancient and God honoured dispensation with which *one* people was concerned? However, his mission is not to finish with destruction; after the night will come the

day. He is not giving us occasion to glory over the downfall of a people; but teaching us how that people's fall will bring in a dispensation of love, mercy, and truth, that will concern equally and for ever every people and tongue and nation under heaven.

BREAKING IN PIECES THE POWER OF THE HOLY PEOPLE

CHAPTER 11.

" The removing of those things that are shaken, that those things which are not shaken may remain."

Page 86 - ALMOST universally this chapter is held to be *the crux* of Apocalyptic interpreters. We are conscious of the difficulties of our task, but we face them without despair. Let us keep a tight grip of the clue line John has put into our hands.

We have now before us the vision which *finishes* " the mystery of God." That mystery is revealed in the " unveiling " of Jesus Christ; and will find solution in the open light of day. What is this mystery ? We can see it gradually coming to the light within this book. It is, put as a human query, — How is God to realize the universal hopes and promises held out to his ancient people, and as well be true to his special covenant with the seed of Abraham ? God was pledged to do great things for his people. His kingdom was to be an everlasting kingdom, and Jerusalem was to be the joy of all the earth.

Now, unless these promises are to be utterly falsified, there must be some real sense in which Judaism does not perish, in which the temple is not destroyed, nor the covenant people cast away. The solution, as we know, is found in a real organic and historic unity between the Church and the covenant people. As Baur would say, there is a real "Ineinander" of the truth as it is in Jesus and the truth according to Moses — the temple of Jerusalem and that temple in which God permanently dwells with men.

Page 87- Saved from the Fire - This unity in God's purpose, and this continuity of his kingdom, are not sufficiently justified by the vision of 144,000 of all the tribes of Israel saved alive in covenant love. Not only must the Jewish stock live on as God's elect, but the ideals on which it was fed by its Prophets must survive, or rather be carried forward into new developments, in which every hope and promise of the past will be abundantly realized. Not only the people must be sealed, but the covenant worship, and its principles. After that, the deluge.

The answer to this demand is now before us. Before absolute destruction comes, John is told *to measure the temple of God* — the *vaos* and its incense altar, with them that worship therein; but to take no reckoning of the outer courts as they have ceased to be of value or significance, and are henceforth to be profaned. As in Ezekiel's case, a temple is to be destroyed; and first measured, because it is to be rebuilt in more

magnificent proportions. Expositors here stumble into errors which we must carefully avoid. We must not conclude (with such as Bleek, Colani, S. Davidson) that John here prophesies that the material temple of Jerusalem is to be saved from destruction in the siege, or (with Macdonald and Russell) that the measuring is the prophecy of its destruction. Destruction is no doubt implied in the measuring; but restoration is the essential idea in the case. The "signs" of this book are not concerned with merely literal events, such as an historian might chronicle, but with the spiritual principles worked out in that history.

Page 88 - The Eternal in the Temporal - We must also avoid the error that the temple measured is the human temple of believing Jews (Weiss, Gebhardt, Waller); and the outer court the unchristian Jews. This would be a needless repetition of the process accomplished in the sealing of the tribes. The vision is meant to tell us how the temple may perish and yet live; Jewish worship cease and yet survive; Old Testament prophecy seem to be belied in the letter while amply fulfilled in the spirit. In Jewish worship there is a kernel which is indestructible; a shell which may be broken and thrown away.

The altar of incense, the offering of a prayerful heart, is the essence of all worship; but the blood of bulls and goats is only a symbol for a season, a mediatorial vehicle to serve until the perfect day is come. Judaism and Christianity are simply various developments of one divine eternal plan. The New Testament was latent in the Old; the Old is transfigured in the New. The Gospel is the temple without its outer court. In Christ Jesus there is no longer Jew and Gentile, male and female, priest and worshipper; but all are one. Christianity is the Holy Place to which every nation has direct access.

The preservation of the outer court in John's symbol would have meant the imposition of Jewish rites on Gentile peoples; or, in other words, it would have made ritualistic Judaism the outer gate of Christianity, as so many Judaizing Christians wished. But now the rudest heathen, washed from sin by the precious blood of Christ, becomes himself a priest to God, with freest access to the Holy Place. The epistle to the Hebrews explains how the Jewish temple is preserved while transfigured.

Page 89 - The Abomination of Desolation - Jesus has opened up the way into the Holiest. We need no son, of Levi, no bestial sacrifice, to introduce us to the fellowship of God ! We have but to come with a cleansed heart, and stand and offer incense for ourselves at the golden altar in the full assurance of faith, for our great High Priest is gone within the veil, and through him our offerings ascend to heaven, and are acceptable to God.

***“Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles,
until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled”***

The destruction of the outer temple court (sacerdotal Judaism) is effected by the trampling forces of ***“ the nations.”*** They are to tread the holy city under foot for ***“ forty and two months”*** ***“The city is here taken as the symbol of the entire people, because the metropolis in common is the centre and essence of the nation or land.”*** (Waller's *Offenbarung, in loco*). That might well be universally admitted. It is surely more than a chance co-incidence that the trampling down of the sacred people by the Romans and their allies began in the spring of 67 A.D., and lasted until Sept. 70 = **42 months.**

Objections are raised to this interpretation (*vide* Alford) on the ground that Jerusalem cannot be called ***“ the holy city,”*** seeing that soon after it is designated ***“Sodom and Egypt,”*** — at least, that both characters cannot be realised in Jerusalem. We cannot feel sure that we ought to treat this objection seriously; but it may be useful to add a word or two upon the point. Every reader of the Scripture surely has observed that the custom is very common of calling a thing or person at once by an ideal and a real name. The ***“ holy seed ”*** are described as acting most profanely; the ***“ saints ”*** are charged with being ***“carnal.”***

Page 90 - Jerusalem Trodden Down - Why should not Jerusalem be called *holy*, viewed by its sacred calling; and *sinful* according to its actual character ? Or, again, as ethical qualities are always relative in finite things, why should Jerusalem not be called *holy* when considered in its contiguity to the profaner forces of heathen Rome; and *sinful* when regarded as in contrast with our sinless Lord, whom it so ruthlessly crucified ? Or, why should not Jerusalem be sometimes named according to its pretensions as a sacred city; and at another time be characterized after the ethical spirit by which it is possessed ? We leave the reader to form his judgement.

At any rate, the meaning of the vision was unmistakably realized in this 42 months' military raid. The Jewish polity in its outward and temporal form (its outer court) was thoroughly pulverized. Palestine was henceforth incorporated with the Roman empire; the country was stripped of its population; the soil was confiscated and sold to the highest bidder; the temple was leveled to the ground, and its sacred vessels carried to Rome to grace the entry of the conquering general; and the contribution of two drachmas which every child of Israel through out the world had hitherto given annually to the temple he was now required to transfer to the Capitol, or centre of Roman worship.

Thus was Judaism in its national life, its religious forms, its pretentious

claim to be the one mediatorial nation, utterly spoiled and broken up. The work went on till finished, and **"the times of the Gentiles"** were brought in. Indeed, the Gentile found his day of grace, because the Jew *qua* Jew had ceased to be. When the temple sank in flames, the practice of the ritual law became impossible; the priesthood was reduced to an honorary sinecure and empty name.

Page 91 - The Truth Set Free - *"This could not but appear"* (says Dollinger, *First Age of the dwell*, 109) ***"to all Christians, surely also to many Jews, as a solemn rejection by God, declared in deeds, of the people He had formerly chosen out of all the nations of the earth."*** Without this, the day of the Gentiles could not have come; at least, by this it came. So witnesses a historian who is not thinking of any text in the book of Revelation:

"The destruction, never to be repaired, of the material temple, cut the cords which bound the new faith to its local habitation, and launched it under the hand of Providence, on its career of spiritual conquest." (Merivale, *Romans under the Empire*, 6.605).

It is also note-worthy that from that day the Jew ceased to make proselytes of the Gentiles. Thus was the symbol of the measured temple amazingly fulfilled. The Roman conquest, treading down the outer court, brought out the glories of the inner sanctuary of God's truth; and at the same time ushered in **"the times of the Gentiles"** — the day of Gentile pre-eminence in the kingdom of heaven.

THE DEATH and RESURRECTION of two WITNESSES

is a symbol whose introduction in this place has been a source of great perplexity, but which, according to our interpretation, could not well have been omitted. ***"No solution has ever been given of this part of the prophecy,"*** are the ominous words with which Alford opens his comment. Events move rapidly in these days, and solutions have been found which only the ultra-fastidious can refuse.

Page 92 - Law and Love - The time during which these two Witnesses prophesy is identical with the treading down of the holy city by the heathen. The latter is given in moons, perhaps because it is a continuous work, and a work of darkness and of night, of judgement and destruction; the former is given in days, because it is a daily and intermittent task, and emphatically a work of light.

Who are these Witnesses ? They are not so much two distinguished persons as two offices or functions, two aspects of God's work in Israel—the governing and the teaching. These ***"two olive trees"*** or ***"two candle-sticks"*** are the two ***"sons of oil"*** referred to by Zechariah — the priest and the king or judge in Israel — who fulfill their offices not by their

personal power and might but by the Spirit of the Lord. In other words, they are the institutions of the Law and the Priesthood — guided by prophetic inspirations. The Law is God's demand that men shall love Him with all their hearts and minds; the Priesthood is God's witness that He loves the sons of men and dwells among them as their Sun and Shield. The Law demands righteousness; the Priesthood offers help to its attainment.

It is, therefore, absolutely true that if men war against these Witnesses they are burned with " **unquenchable fire.**" Truth and Love are the keys of the kingdom of life; men must revere them or be scorched to death in that fire of brimstone which is the righteous breath of the Lord. The Old Testament never wearies witnessing, and the foregoing trumpet plagues are the latest proofs, that all heaven's rain, all earth's fruitfulness, and all society's order are dependent on their being honoured; while all the plagues of Egypt and Sodom break out of the abyss when men war against their sovereignty.

Page 93 - The Old Truth Glorified - Moral evil, in short, is the primal fount and origin of all man's miseries on earth. Expositors are greatly tempted to find these Witnesses in Christian apostles and preachers. They sometimes search Jerusalem in its latter days for two apostles who were slain, and may have had the marvelous resurrection here narrated. It is scarcely possible to be farther off the track. It turns the "**sign**" into a verbal prediction, which it is not. It ignores the statement that it is *impossible for any man to hurt them*, because in the attempt **the man himself must be killed.**

The martyrdom of two personal Christian witnesses would flatly contradict this intimation. Besides, the Apostles cannot yet be appropriately introduced, as the Gospel age is not yet officially begun. The Jewish age is still only on its dying bed, and John concerned only with its dying agonies, and what can be saved from the wreck. From its people there has been saved a remnant — the believing Israel; from its temple, there has been saved the Holy Place — does nothing more remain to be conserved? Yes, one thing more — the divine soul of the dispensation's truth !

The very fact that "**a seed** " was saved, is proof that there was something divine and eternal in Israel's worship and polity; and the sealing of the saints therefore logically involves the measuring of the Holy Place, and the resurrection of these Witnesses. The parallel between the three is very close, and crammed full of instruction. The elect seed, transferred from Judaism to the Church of Christ, is the core or heart of the Jewish people. The Holy Place is the vital centre of the Temple system.

Page 94 - Christ in the Old Testament - The inner soul of the Witnesses is made indestructible in this figurative resurrection. In all three cases, the outer and more profane is given over to destruction; the inner essence of all three survives. Israel is preserved in its faithful people; in its spiritual temple; and in the principles of which its temple was the home; or, to vary the expression for illustration's sake, the Kingdom of God in its people, its worship, and its truth and government lived on through the night of judgement which had fallen upon its corruptions, and the cumbrous encrustations which had clung to it and destroyed its usefulness.

But **whose** are these two Witnesses ? We infer, without express instruction, that they are Christ's. Well might He call the light-giving and ruling offices in Judaism *his Witnesses*. Prophets, priests, and kings were the forerunners, the divine make-shifts, set up until the ideal prophet, priest, and king should come.

All the Scriptures "**testify of me**," said He. The law and the prophets were preaching Christ, often not knowing what they did, all through the ages from the first. Such is the standpoint of this book — "**The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy**" (19.10). There would have been no law, no covenant people, no priest or king, if there had been no Christ to come in the fullness of the times.

Where do these Witnesses prophecy ? The answer is contained in the very nature of the Witnesses. It can only be "**in the streets of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified**" Without veil, the scene is Jerusalem, " "It is called the GREAT city, as farther on is Babylon, because it is the metropolis, and representative of the collective body of the rejected covenant people, as Babylon is mentioned as the capital and centre of the heathen world." — (Waller, 243).

Page 95 - The Christian's Egypt - In spiritual character, this so-called holy city is only to be named with Sodom and Egypt. Isaiah was very bold, and in Jerusalem addressed its dignitaries as "**Ye rulers of Sodom.**" In Jeremiah's time, as in John's Jehovah was compelled to say of the prophets — "**Ye are all to me as Sodom.**" Alford stumbles sorely because the designation — "**Egypt**" is not found in the prophets. Israel could not be Egypt until it became a house of bondage and oppression; and that was impossible until a more spiritual people than itself arose to suffer from its yoke.

If we remember how frequently our Lord and his Apostles spoke of the Jewish system as holding its subjects in bonds, imposing a burden greater than men could bear, as being a yoke of bondage robbing men of the freedom into which Christ had come to lead them; or if we know the

history of apostolic times, when there was the greatest danger of Jewish elements prevailing in the Church, and swamping it, or let me say, transferring it into a petty Judaeian sect, we cannot be surprised that the Jerusalem which then was, was in the eyes of such as Paul and John a veritable Egyptian house of bondage.

Here then, in this hotbed of lawlessness and oppression the principles of Old Testament revelation lift up their feeble voice. They have sadly lost their wonted power and glory, and instead of goodly garments walk in sackcloth as becomes the evil times. Even in those dark days there were a few in high places who openly rebuked the murderous wickedness and anarchy which prevailed.

Page 99 - High Carnival - Prophetic voices even plainly uttered presages of doom in the city streets. No man cared; or only cared so far that by a dagger he soon silenced the hateful voice. Hear Josephus about the Zealot defenders of Jerusalem: "*These men trampled upon all the laws of men and laughed at the laws of God; and for the oracles of the prophets, they ridiculed them as the tricks of jugglers.*" The powers of hell prevailed; the beast from the abyss (certainly not Nero, but the Dragon), with its locust sensualities and its demoniac hosts, did what no man nor sword could do — profaned and desolated the sacred forms of truth and righteousness.

This shameful spectacle proceeding through those months was a source of sorrow to the few, but of jubilant rejoicing to the multitude. To be at liberty to follow their propensities and gratify their sensual lusts without divine restraint is, alas, a very welcome liberty to men whose hearts are black. Every unbeliever in the divinity of religion, every heathen man who had been annoyed by the Jew's assumed superiority, every Roman politician of the time, was happy to think that Judaism was rotting for the Roman eagles; every Jew who wished freedom from the restraints of justice and religion would hold high carnival over the evident collapse of sacred principles so long revered.

On every side there were gracious congratulations that a radical reform had come. It was a scene that may be repeated any day; indeed, never is wanting where right and wrong are struggling for the mastery. Every epoch of anarchy and bloodshed has had its brood of fiends who stood apart in safety and shouted their applause.

Page 97 - Judaism Perfected by its Death - Let us be charitable enough to hope that it has been mostly in the delusive dream that "*the day of the wine-press of wrath*" is the forerunner of a "good time coming."

"The sign of the Prophet Jonas."

The resurrection which soon follows intimates that divine principles cannot perish from the earth. They rise from the dead like their Master; though not so suddenly. God's work may appear to vanish before the violence of men; but the vanishing point is truly the moment of its awakening to new power, and its assumption of complete supremacy. The peoples and nations that rejoiced over the silencing of divine truth and authority, and hoped never again to be tormented by the claims of one true and righteous God, were speedily disturbed in their godless revelry.

As Judaism died, Christianity shot up into fresh and wondrous power. It seemed to the heathen as if the old hateful truths had been clothed with diviner power, and exalted up to heaven. They had thought that the worship of the God of the Jews was at an end; that with its weird condemning voice for ever hushed, its severe unsympathetic purity ceasing to rebuke their superstitious revelries, they undisturbed could still enjoy the sweet licentiousness of their pagan cults; but no, — God's Witnesses arose in form more terrible with heavenly light, and bore a more effective testimony against the world's evil.

"Behold, your house is left unto yon desolate."

Whether this earthquake is to be taken as a physical upheaval may be questioned. Seeing that it is not narrated *as a vision*, but as if it were history, it may well be taken in a physical sense.

Page 98 - Earthquake. Terrors - There certainly was such a storm and earthquake, when God's Witnesses were lying trodden in the streets of Jerusalem, as made even the boldest think that God was judging them. Josephus tells us of ***"a prodigious storm in the night, with strong winds, drenching rains, continued lightnings, terrible thunderings, and amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth."*** This, he says, portended some dreadful calamity; as indeed it did. Next morning it was found that Ananus, the high priest, a man of singularly noble character, and other venerable teachers of the people, had been slain in the temple courts, then ***"cast out naked into the streets to be the food of dogs and wild beasts."*** That night, **8,500** men were slain, and from that hour, Josephus says, may be reckoned "the beginning of the destruction of the city, the overthrow of her wall, and the ruin of her affairs." (*Wars*, B. iv., chs 4,5.) These occurrences are altogether strikingly like what John describes in broader features and more spiritual form. However, we must not think that it is against the city of stone and lime that God's wrath here is hurled, or that God can desire Jerusalem to be blotted out. It is on the men, with their false religious system, their sins and godless tempers, that heaven's judgement falls. Enough that Jerusalem's power is broken; her proud sons humbled in the dust; her theocratic dignities withdrawn.

It looks, indeed, as if some blessing had come to Jerusalem by these premonitions of destruction. ***"the rest were affrighted and gave glory to God"*** Expositors sometimes import into this the meaning that the Jewish people are to profit by their afflictions, and repent so far as to ***"become a Christian people, a true Israel, and Jerusalem a truly holy city."*** (Gebhardt, &c.)

Page 99 - Wickedness and Worship - Of course, that prophecy, if ever made, was falsified. But John makes no such anticipation. Telling the night-side of Israel's story, he could not introduce so much of the rosy morning, — especially when such a national morning was not to dawn. What more natural than that when such divine judgements are in the land, men should discern that those who escape particular judgements are no safer than those who fall. ***"The rest"*** — were they holier than those who perished in a night? Were not they, too, destructible? Might not their names be in God's book for a judgement day, tomorrow or the next ? What will they do in their fear ? Give glory unto God, such glory as such fearful souls can give. But what profit comes of it ?

What can worship in which Catastrophe takes the place of Conscience lead to? Nothing but a pacification of men's fears, and a renewal of their evil ways. The piety born of fear is not regenerative; fright does not save. It can awaken in a selfish way; and bring men to talk flatteringly before the face of God. But ***" wickedness and worship "*** are an old conjunction which God will not tolerate; and the story of this book must therefore run: — ***"Behold, the third woe cometh quickly"***
" At the sound of the last trump."

The seventh angel sounded. The mystery of God is finished. The heavenly voices declare that God's purpose is now made plain. ***" The kingdom of the world is now become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and He shall reign far ever and ever"***

Page 100 - Thy Kingdom Come - Here, the mystery of God is revealed as a grand two-sided truth; Jesus Christ is God's one vice-regent, the head and summation of humanity; and this Christ, as Paul so frequently insisted, is commanded now to be made known unto *all nations* for the obedience of the faith (Rom 16.25-26), in accordance with God's purpose to have a dispensation of the fullness of the times in which all things are summed up in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth (Eph 9.9-10); or, in other words, with God's purpose that the Gentiles shall be fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus (3.6). Thus clearly, the time of the sounding of the trumpet is the moment when God officially in history makes plain his purpose to abolish the distinction between Jew and Gentile, and make them members of one Church in Christ. If ever there was such a moment, or can be, never could it be more appropriately done

than when the primary, elementary, and limited dispensation of the *law* was brought to an official end by the divine abrogation of the temple ritual; and the Gospel preacher was made free to invite the ends of the earth into the Church of God on a footing of equality with the best of Abraham's sons. Here is the historical fulfillment of "*the Gospel of the Kingdom*" preached by the Baptist and by Christ Himself some 40 years before: — "*The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*" Few were then the signs that Christ was on his way to such marked supremacy; but the *via dolorosa* led to the stars and to the crown. Now that proud religion which contemned Him is plucked up and cast into the fire and burned, whilst He is seen "*coming in his kingdom,*" clothed with power and glory.

"When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth:'"

Page 101 - Why do the Heathen Rage ? - Well may the heavens with brimming hearts of love, lift up their voice and sing. Much more joyfully might the earth hail the coming of the Lord to his rightful throne; the revelation of a sovereignty in which love and power go hand in hand to put to shame the tyrannies and brutalities of the petty kings of earth.

Yet there was no thankfulness on earth because no faith, no not in Israel, to see that God had set his Christ upon David's throne as a blessing to the world. "*The nations were wrath,*" at the theocratic pretensions of the Jews, and against the claims of the God of Israel. The kings and princes of the earth had hated every thought that limited their right to reign, and promised liberty to oppressed and groaning peoples.

God answers men according to their kind. Obstructive institutions, wrathful against the truth, He baptizes with his wrath. Evil has a tremendous grip of life on earth. Men are by nature lovers of tradition, followers of precedent. If a thing is *old* it is highly revered. Our *old* nobility, old customs, our most ancient Church, are, like old wine, the better of their keeping. Satan, has a prescriptive right to reign if he has had possession long enough. Vested interests, is the most sacred principle of political economy. Therefore, we stand aside, and let old hoary evils flourish, if not too corrupt to stand erect. God baptizes with his wrath whatever on this earth has served its day. "*Spare it, for it is old !*" we say. "*It is old, so let it die,*" is the decree of God. We dream fondly of the old old world; but God is ever hastening toward a new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

"The trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised."

Page 102 - The Judgement Day - Not only was it God's time to judge his land; it was also "*the time of the dead that they should be judged*" This is a revelation for which many of the readers of the Apocalypse are not

prepared. It is, however, in strictest keeping with the teaching of the Gospels and Epistles. Christ and his Apostles, without exception, taught that judgement was at hand, not only for the living, but. for the dead as well. The proof texts are so numerous that we need not quote them; but it may be needful again to warn some readers that the immediateness of the judgement to Apostolic times is not always expressed as it ought to be in our English translations. It seems most fitting that at the close of a dispensation a judgement should take place of all those who are or have been under its laws. It is the divine method that the things of each dispensation shall be entirely wound up and put in order before it pass away. The living Jew was judged and self-condemned by the preaching of the Gospel. Its rejection was his sentence to his doom. Whatever be the meaning of St. Peter, he illustrates this principle in his statement that "*the gospel was preached even to the dead that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.*"

He does seem to say that the preliminary preparations for a judgement of the spirit-world began with the risen life of Christ. By all appearance it is to this invisible judgement Christ refers where he says in John 5.26 — "*THE HOUR COMETH, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God.*"

Page 103 - The Resurrection of the Dead - That is no figurative transaction with people figuratively dead; from the fact that the execution of judgement is the predominant idea in the Saviour's mind and from the still more emphatic and unmistakable repetition of the truth in 5.28 — "*The hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice and come forth*" unto life or judgement. Such was the uniform teaching of our Lord's Apostles. If our Lord's coming was impending, so necessarily was the judgement day; and that such sublime events are the fitting accompaniment of an epoch so marked in its significance as the close of an age, surely no one can deny.

" The dead in Christ shall rise first."

Consequently, this is the moment when all those who have feared the Lord receive their rewards. The prophets, the saints, the martyrs with their weary cry beneath the altar — "*How long, O Lord,*" are delivered from the bands of death and attain to glory and honour. The Lord has descended with a shout, with the sound of the last trump, the keys of Hades in his hands, and delivered his waiting saints. This is the first resurrection. Here again we strike a telling note of harmony between the Apocalypse and other portions of the Scripture.

The resurrection is declared to be coming on apace in the Gospels; in the Epistles to be near; in the Apocalypse to be come. The dead saints enter upon their rest at the close of the old dispensation.

The new age with its new liberties to the earth, has new liberties for the unseen world. The prison doors of ignorance and unbelief on earth open synchronously with the prison doors of Hades.

Page 104 - A Promise Kept - Here is the fulfillment of the promise Christ made to his disciples — *"A little while and ye shall see me again; I shall come for you and take you to myself ! "* Here, too, is the fulfillment of the assurance of the angels on Mount Olivet: *" Ye shall see Him in like manner come to you again ! "*

This glorious fulfillment of the promise has been forgotten in our Protestant Church, and expiscated from all Protestant theology. It was a powerful thought, and a happy one, in the faith of the early Church, though accompanied with unfortunate limitations. Dante could celebrate the arrival in Hades of

" um Possentu Con segno di vittoria incoronato "

— a Potentate with sign of victory crowned, whose word released the spirits of his waiting saints, the first fruits of his triumph ! Were it not well for us in these days to enter into the possession of the full faith, not alone of the ancient Church, but of the written Word; and to rejoice that Christ has indeed led captive captivity, and not left heaven empty of his risen saints?

Then comes the ominous intimation that *"the time is come to destroy them that destroy the land"* This might readily be understood of those lawless and disorderly Jews or benighted religionists who had been the curse of Palestine. But clearly, although their judgement has not been carried to completion in detail, they are to be understood as judged. This note is the intimation of a fresh extension of the field of judgement, of which we are on the eve. Those who have been God's instruments in destroying the covenant people, and have trodden down the holy city, are themselves to be judged in their turn.

Page 105 - Heaven Opened to Believers - *" If judgement must begin at the house of God, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God ? "* Or if such things have been done in the green tree of Judaea, what shall be done in the dry tree of that heathenism which vaunts itself against the honour of the only God? Anon we shall see this work proceed; John's plan necessitates a halt in order to make a new beginning upon different lines.

" The way into the holiest is wide manifest "

Meanwhile, *the temple in heaven is opened*. That is the signal of two glorious facts.

(1.) The reward of the risen saints is, to enter into more immediate fellowship with God. They have ascended into a more perfect life. Never before was that degree of heaven open to foot of man save Christ's; but now the promise is fulfilled — "*I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also . . . to behold my glory.*"

(2.) The temple in Jerusalem is gone; God's house on earth is left desolate. All eyes are now towards heaven. The way into the holiest is made manifest, because the first tabernacle is no longer standing. Thus are we parabolically taught how, in the new dispensation of the gospel, God and man are reconciled, and brought into a closeness of communion which presages certain victory to God in the ultimate history of humanity.

There is one thing apt to strike the reader as very strange in the contents of this last trumpet — the apparent insignificance of its contents, in form at least. Great things are *told* to John; but there is no grand vision, no fullness of detail, no emphasis as if these things were of much importance; whereas, from the last and crowning trumpet we should have expected some grand *denouement*, in which all that is past would be comprehended and explained.

Page 106 - Finis ! - Nevertheless, this last trumpet really contains the whole gist of what has gone before; and it sums up, in few words, all that is to come in the second part of the Apocalypse. It is not by any means, as Ewald has said, a prelude to the following visions; but it is the whole of the following visions in epitome. And the reason for this particular brevity of narration seems to be, that almost all the contents of this last trumpet (signifying as it does the advent of the Gospel age, with all its magnificent endowment of Christian blessing) belongs rather to the MORNING of "*the Great Day of the Lord*" than to the NIGHT.

It is always hard to draw a line between the night and the morning; and John, since he must draw it, chooses to do it so that the light of the morning will make a narrow band of brightness on the eastern side of the night. Artistically, his picture is complete. We have seen the old age die of sheer rottenness and inanity; and we know that a new age follows. John will immediately proceed to introduce the morning of a better day. We know how Judaism died; we shall see how the sun of the Gospel rose, and fought with clouds, and mists, and storms, until it shone with the light of an eternal day.

PART II

DAYSPRING; OR THE ADVENT OF THE CHRISTIAN AGE.

“Howl ye woe worth the day !

*For the day is near, even the day of the Lord is near,
a day of Clouds; it shall be the time of the nations ”*

*“ As the lightening cometh forth from the East
and is seen even to the West
so shall be the coming of the Son of Man”*

*“ Say watchman, what’s off the night ?
Do the dews of the morning fall ?
Have the orient skies a border of light,
Like the fringe of a funeral pall ?
The night is fast waning on high,
And soon shall the darkness flee,
And the morn shall spread o’er the blushing sky,
And bright shall its glories be.” — Anon.*

THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON.

CHAPTER XII.

"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Page 109 - SERIOUS difficulties have arisen over the structure of this book, — many critics and expositors having failed to notice the principle on which John treats his theme; or rather, on which *"the day of the Lord"* is revealed to him. As typical of such, we may cite first a case which was lately introduced to English readers in the pages of the Expositor. A German scholar (Vischer) thinks that the Lamb whom we have seen in the midst of the throne cannot be Christ because Christ is not born until we come to chapter 12.

His English cicerone (Simcox) sympathizes, and thinks it hard to suppose that an event can be described in chapter 12 which was 70 years in the past. These apparent discordances naturally lead to uncomplimentary theories of the book's origin. All such misconceptions cease so soon as we apprehend John's simple and natural, therefore truly artistic plan; a twofold representation of the day of the Lord — mutually supplementary; but either of which might stand alone as meeting the requirements of the title — *"THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST."*

A few who have noted this double structure have failed to see the principle on which it is done; and the line of cleavage has been drawn at chapter 10. with a trumpet still to sound, and the tragedy left suddenly suspended in the air.

Page 110 - The Authors Plan - The general plan of the book makes it plain that only here, between 9. and 12., do we reach the dividing line; and are able to look back and behold a finished work. John's subject is *"The Great Day of the Lord "* — the coming of Christ in those events of judgement and redemption which are the official introduction of the Messianic age — the age of the Kingdom of God; or, as better known by us, the age of the Gospel.

That great day, as suited the Hebrew mind of John, is arranged in two successive periods of darkness and light; or, as we say, night and day. *"The evening and the morning were day one."*

The *"day of the Lord,"* like the creative day, begins with chaos and night (the gloom of judgement in the falling of sun, moon, and stars); and then it proceeds with the creation of the light, and the victories of light, in new bloom and beauty on the earth. This is the regulating principle of the order of the Apocalypse, and our readers can easily put the matter to the test.

Renan gives expression to a very common feeling of bewilderment at this part of his comment in his **Antichrist**. He says that "**the author is little careful of the unity of his work,**" and cannot understand how, when all seems finished, John "**reserves the means of continuing his tale.**"

Our readers will see that the fundamental plan of the book implies such a narrative as we have had, and the resumption of the tale afresh from a different point of view. All apparent confusion disappears before the fact that we witness first the night of judgement, then the dawning of the better day; see *first*, how a decadent divine dispensation dies, *then* how from its womb a diviner age is born.

Page 111 - Destruction and Reconstruction - Look back and see. Is it not evident that we have been hitherto concerned, as on this principle we ought, with the decline and fall of the ancient Church — with Judaism, her apostasy, her growing darkness and her doom ? We have been passing through the darkness of the night; and have followed its weary hours until we found that the day was about to break, or had just broken and no more. On the night-side of God's day, *We* are not meant to see much of the Church of Christ, or even of Christ Himself, except under clouds of darkness.

The narrative is concerned with destruction and not reconstruction. Scarcely do we see anything of the latter beyond the fact that there are in Judaism certain things which must survive; and that in the fires of judgement God preserves them. A spiritual people, a spiritual worship, and a body of spiritual truths are seen to survive the general wreck. We know without instruction that this is substantially the ideal Church of God: the nucleus of what comes to be the Church of Christ. As yet, however, the new is hidden in the old. The things which can be shaken must be removed in order "**that what cannot be shaken may appear.**"

The scaffolding hides the gracious proportions of the building which is growing up within its lines; only when the formal and the temporary are removed do we have a vision of the imperishable ideal. John has hitherto written only the dying history of the old; he will now write the birth and growth to manhood of the new. Our ears have heard the cry — "**the King is dead !**" and now we shall be pointed to his Son and heir, and hear the acclamations of the multitude — "**Long live the King!**" In other words, we shall now have the light-side of "**the day of the Lord.**"

Page 112 - The Daughter of Zion - The darkening night has been pictured; we shall see the same scenes from the standpoint of the dawning day. The day-star of the Church will be seen in weakness and struggle with the dark clouds of the passing night. Not only will the morning break; the sun will slowly yet surely ascend the sky, wrestling with

many a long trailing serpent cloud until it reach the zenith of its glory. This method of handling the subject compels us to travel over much of the ground a second time. Night and morning intermingle and overlap at many points, and so do we find it in John's book.

Especially is this true, as indeed it ought to be, in the closing verses of Part I., where the Seer is on the borderland of the better day. That last trumpet ushers in the dawn, and therefore it is a brief epitome of the visions yet to come, in which are depicted the rise and triumph of Christian Truth. Thus grasping the scheme of the book, we shall the easier thread our way through impending intricacies, and be able to avoid difficulties over which other feet have stumbled.

“ Zion travailed . . . She was delivered of a man child “

John sees ***“ a woman arrayed with the sun, the moon beneath her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.”***

Expositors find here, with unusual unanimity, a symbol of the Church the bride of God. The glories which invest her are not her own. Her brightness is the refulgence of the Sun of Righteousness. But which Church is this ? It is inadmissible to answer, the Hebrew Christian Church of Judea; because in that case, the mother would be her own son, and the son his own mother; and while the mother flees into the wilderness, as the son she would be carried up to heaven.

Page 113 - The Birth of Christ.- Confusion upon confusion. This interpretation is favoured because of unwillingness to break the continuity of the visions by going back 70 years, and finding here the birth of Christ. However, we must needs go back if John is starting *de novo* to explain the coming of the day of the Lord from the positive and constructive side. This woman is the Church as continuously existing throughout Jewish history. It is elect humanity as loved, comforted, and made fruitful by the grace of God; the daughter of Zion in her beautiful array; that spiritual remnant of whom Christ as to the flesh was born.

Thus does John once again catch up another of those permanent ideals which sparkle like diamonds in the page of the prophetic word. God has not forsaken Zion; nor forgotten the wife of his love; nor so much as changed in his eternal purpose. ***“The gifts and calling of Cod are without repentance.”*** The Church of the past is one with the Church of the future, except that the latter is lifted up into a purer faith, a brighter hope, and a diviner charity.

This ***“Man child”*** is Christ. The ***“Dragon”*** is that old Serpent the Devil. This animal form is chosen as the most suitable type of sensual wisdom, cruelty and cunning, armed with multifarious forms of power, and crowned with universal sovereignty. Here he lies in waiting for Christ's birth.

Thus does John give unity to all Anti-Christian forms of evil. This is the envenomed power that inspired the fox like enmity of Herod; that prompted Judas to betray his Master, and stirred up Priest and Pharisee to slay Him, in the hope that, Christ once destroyed — the Kingdom of the world would continue in subjection to its dark and desolating sway

Page 114 - Satanic Darkness - This same dragon lies in wait to destroy the birth of good in every human soul, to quench the faintest glimmerings of new light, and to oppose every heavenly influence and doctrine that would deliver men from its fatal delusions.

The stars of heaven dragged to earth by this dragons tail may point us to that great apostasy of angels which figures so largely in rabbinical theology and which has passed over bodily into Christian thought (whether in corroboration or merely as a note of identification, we cannot say); or it may symbolize Satan's power over those human lights which God has set for the guidance of humanity. The saddest page in human history is, the records of its men of light and leading.

From the grandest heights they have fallen into deepest depths. There is mingling with the stream of human life an element of contrariety which often perverts the highest gifts and the most sacred offices to mean and selfish, even beastly uses. Such an apostasy, we might say, had been universal over three fourths of the world; the light had been turned to darkness.

This had taken place even among the stars of Judaism; later, among the star like minds of Christendom. All great truths have had their light obscured by the bad perversions of gifted and powerful minds who have paid homage to the dragon principle in preference to the God of love.

*"I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance;
thou shalt break them with a rod of iron."*

This man child *"was SOON to rule. all nations with a rod of iron"* These words present us with the governmental aspect of Christ's saving work.

Page 115 - Absolute Morality - He came into the world to found a kingdom co-extensive with the human race. That is equivalent to the redemption of mankind from its vain traditions, its evil habits, its enslaving tyrannies. His government is to be firm and strong. Satan had ruled the world hitherto on the principle of license. Heathen religions kept their sway because tolerant of the immorality of king and subject, the noble and his slave; and tyrants had been popular in proportion as they had pandered to the frivolous and sensuous tastes of priests and people. Christ came to institute a kingdom of inflexible righteousness.

Even the pretentious righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees will not satisfy his iron law. His administration will be puritanical compared with the immoral looseness of other kings and conquerors. His laws will be absolute; his will in the end irresistible. Under his dominion the decree holds sway — Men shall reap as they sow. This ideal purity is not always realized in Christendom; but the ideal remains today not one whit accommodated to the weak desires of men.

We have in this sentence a conjunction of ideas quite alien to current conceptions. Christ is "**SOON**" to rule the nations, and for this purpose is "***caught up to God and to his throne.***" Usually it is understood that the reign of Christ was not to be until a day far distant from the time of John, and that Christ must rather descend from the throne of God and come personally to the earth in order to begin his reign.

Largely it is believed that Christ is powerless now; remains an uncrowned King until He can come down from heaven and set up a throne in imitation of Caesar's in Jerusalem. On the contrary, the Scriptures associate his Kingship with his ascent.

Page 116 - War in Heaven - He is all powerful because He is at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, and his ascension was the moment of his investment with a power and government which know no end. That indeed was the index of his triumph, the declaration of his royalty, and the leading captive of captivity.

It is in that glorified condition, at the centre of Being, that Christ exercises all his power; and his second advent must be held in strict subordination to the truth that He cannot leave his heavenly throne, nor needs to leave it for the increase of his glory and dominion. He ascended up to the matrix of all power in order that He might reign; to leave that centre is to condescend to weakness and the abnegation of his universal sovereignty.

"I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

(1) The first effect of Christ's sovereignty is — "***war in heaven***" There are four different spheres in which this statement may possibly be fulfilled. It may point us to some actual conflict, not indeed of arms but of truth and error, in the inner spirit-world or heavens.

Satan, according to Jewish thought, had access to heaven and to the ear of God; and could prejudice the cause of men with God. Pared to the quick, that may signify only that the evil or imperfect states of the inhabitants of the ancient spirit-world had a prejudicial effect upon the spiritual states and fortunes of men on earth; and that human advancement is dependent on the defeat or lessening of evil in the unseen world.

Page 117 - Satan Overcame - This idea, so far as we know, is developed only in the schemes of certain of the mystics.

(2) It may mean that until Christ overthrew the power of Satan by his assumption of his mediatorial powers, and his opening of the Holiest to his people, even Christians in the spirit life were in some sense imperfect, as the epistle to the Hebrews hints, and in that sense still accused of sin (Gebhardt).

(3) That Satanic influences warred against the truth as preached by the Apostles; while heavenly influences warred upon their side and overcame. Paul had some such conception of an unseen foe — *"We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities; etc., in high places."*

(4) It may signalize the installation of Christ upon his Father's throne in his glorified humanity as a fresh bond of peace between earth and heaven. Now, God and man are reconciled. The guiltiest can come to God without any longer being tormented by accusing fears that sound as the condemning voice of God Satan Overcome. These are not so much diverse interpretations, as branches of one and the same conception. If the first be true, and Christ in some local sense has purified the higher regions of the unseen, and so *"prepared a place for us,"* then all the other senses are in agreement with the fact and form a part of it.

Possibly the strongest view may be the nearest to the truth. Truth is stranger than fiction; and this old eastern notion of fallen angels cast out of heaven, at which the young world laughs, may be a historical reality. At all events, this overthrow of Satan as a consequence of the ascent of Christ to heaven, is in some grand and worthy sense beyond all doubt. When at last our Lord stood in view of his death and resurrection, He said: *"Now is the hour and power of darkness;"* but He could prophetically add, *"Now is the prince of this world cast out."*

Page 118 - The Accuser Refuted - Thus we see how fitly such a conflict is recorded by the pen of John, as following the advent of Jesus to his throne. Immediately there is joy in heaven, because the devil is dethroned, and Christ, *"the friend of sinners,"* is invested with the authority of God.

With Christ, his saints have triumphed against all the accusations of the evil one. Satan's foulest charge against humanity is, its selfishness; its proneness to make profit even of religion. *"Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life."* That accusation was refuted by **the blood of the Lamb**, and then by every blood drop wrung from the martyrs' veins. *"They loved not their life"* Rather than deny the truth they died a dreadful death, and demonstrated their fidelity to truth and God.

They were able to die because the Lamb had died. *"The blood of the*

Lamb was a perpetual witness to them that God had reconciled the world unto Himself. It was a living sacrament of a perpetual and living union between the children on earth and their Father in heaven . . . Therefore these men could throw away their lives, knowing that the truth was worth more than their lives, and that they might trust their lives unto the God of truth," (Maurice). What glory is thus shed around the memories of those noble men ! Their martyrdom is made a portion of their Saviour's triumph; for it seems that Christ, with Michael and his hosts, could not have silenced the accuser unless down on earth men had proved by deeds that they could die for God and for his truth.

Page 119 - Climax of Wickedness - But what is joyful for the inhabitants of heaven is misery for the dwellers upon earth. The devil is come down full of wrath and the bitterness of despair. Heaven is lost; he still may have the sweet revenge of creating a wilder turbulence on earth. Now there breaks upon the land a wave of selfishness and hatred that boils in wrath against whatever is divine, and spares neither kith nor kin in its devastating *fury It was indeed a wicked age, " a time of devil ascendancy over the world,"* a ripening of the harvest of iniquity.

The overflow of the cup of earth's sinful abominations, such a festering mass of wickedness never before nor since was seen in human history. As we read the dreadful story of the middle of that century in the pages of Gibbon or Mommsen, or directly face to face in Tacitus or Suetonius, one's heart bleeds for that suffering generation, whether Jews or Gentiles, and seeks in vain for consolation except in the assurance that the very violence and brutality of its evil must the sooner hasten its final removal from the earth.

"Let them that are in Judaea flee into mountains !"

And how fares it with the Church ? The malignity of that generation surged in storms against the Church, especially the Hebrew-Christian Church. A fit of persecuting zeal was at its height, when the national troubles with the Romans diverted attention from the Christian cause. Then came the tramp of Roman legions through the land; and heathen armies threatened to be more destructive than the persecutor's blows. But the Church remembered the warning of her Lord: ***"Let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains,"*** and the wings of God's protecting love bore them safely from the field.

Page 120 - Persecution and False Doctrine - Our earliest Church historians tell us that the Jewish Christians fled at the outbreak of the war to Pella, on the borders of Arabia, and there dwelt in safety until peace returned. Though stripped and left with nothing but a bare subsistence during those three years and a half in which the Romans trampled down

the land, they weathered the storm of desolation and found them years of safety and repose.

Foiled in his use of fire, the dragon ***"casts out of his mouth a flood of water as a river"*** in order to sweep the infant Church away. The serpent is sensual and demoniac wisdom; the waters of his mouth, are a flood of fleshly but pretentiously spiritual speculations, under the ambitious name of ***Gnosis***.

You hear enough of this in many of the Epistles — of seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, forbidding to marry, teaching the worshipping of angels, denying the resurrection, denying even ***"the Lord that bought them"*** — all of which Paul calls, ***"the profane babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called"*** — ***"foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition."*** What waters were these for the Church to float in after she was loosed from her old moorings !" and the Apostles fast passing over to the other shore.

Salvation did not come by the counter reasoning's of the Timothies, Apolloses, and Clements who were left to fill the Apostles' places. Everything in a speculation depends upon its relations to the wants of life. Paul told the Colossians how to answer them — ***"Mortify your members; keep from sin."*** He wrote to Timothy: ***"The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and good conscience, and faith unfeigned — follow after these and you will not be swept away."***

Page 121 - Doctrine, known by its Fruits - And what says the vision which John sees ? ***"The earth opened her month and swallowed up the flood."*** and found them years of safety and repose. Every one soon discerns whether such speculations have power in them to purify the life and refresh it amid its constant tear and wear. Will they help us to be purer and happier here on earth ? — that is what every Christian wants; not something that will merely pique his fancy and swell his imagination with unpractical dreams. Let us not be afraid of the floods that men call heresy. We shall soon know whether we can live by them or not, and whether there is anything in them that can help us in an evil hour.

"And the dragon was wroth." The earth in which he trusts betrays him. The mother Church is faithful to her King, repels the heresies of Antichrist, and like a faithful wife, goes on to multiply the children of her Lord. The dragon then turns with greater hope against the children scattered through the world. The Christians in the Gentile world must be persecuted, rooted out, else the powers of hell will be speedily dispossessed.

Observe against whom it is the dragon goes to war. He wages not merely a war of falsehood against truth; but a war of evil against good. Satanic

bitterness does not waste itself in rage against a sentimental, speculative, or dilettanti piety; it hates as hell hates heaven, the piety that keeps God's commandments — the charity that thinks no evil — that loves its neighbour as itself, and finds its strength in God, a God of love who has united Himself to the human race by the testimony of a suffering, dying, ascending and reigning Christ. Let that indicate how you are to obtain the victory — not as believers in abstract doctrines or in concrete priestly superstitions; but as you take up God's will and honestly strive to do it.

Page 122 - Safety in Obedience - War against self-love within your soul; hold fast to your redeeming Father as you see Him in the face of Christ, and you will win eternal victory. A child of the light and of the day, you will neither in time nor in eternity be a citizen of the kingdom of darkness over which Satan reigns.

THE WILD BEAST FROM THE SEA

CHAPTER XIII.

"Anti-Christ is already come."

Page 123 - IT is the dragon that stands upon the shore, and looks wistfully across the sea as if waiting for some confederate to assist him in his evil work. The devil is never at a loss for tools to do his work. *A beast ascends out of the sea* — that may be out of the midst of many peoples, and tongues, and nations; or the "sea" may be a fragment of literalism in the picture, and in that case the beast will be some distant power whose domain is somewhere across the Mediterranean Sea.

In either case, we may premise with safety that it represents the Roman Empire. The dragon is a power whose *locus* is the air; therefore it is a purely intellectual and moral force whose supremacy in the world is maintained by the inspiration of material agencies to do its will. The beast belongs by its nature to the earth; and yet has such affinities with this evil-natured dragon that it becomes a willing tool for the accomplishment of Satanic purposes.

This beast has so much in common with the four great beasts of Daniel's vision, that we are bound to regard it as a vast political power whose realm embraces the territory of Daniel's beasts. Presumably this is the Roman world — the empire of the Caesars. John will soon settle it beyond a doubt.

Page 124 - The Heads of the Beast - These "**seven heads**" of the beast, he tells us in chapter 17, are seven successive king's. Five of them are fallen when John writes; the sixth is reigning; a seventh is to come and reign a little time; an eighth head is to be in power when judgement is at its consummation. It is evident that we have here some world power which has three reigning heads within a few brief years — and those years far on in the life of the apostle John. What power can that be but Rome — which actually had seven reigning heads or more within the last half of John's life, and at the time demanded by this interpretation of John's book.

These "**ten horns**" may therefore be either the Roman legions, or the ten main provinces of the empire, with their diademed, semi independent kings. Another interpretation mark is given in 5.3 — one of these heads or kings is smitten so as to endanger the beast's life, but there is a rapid and surprising recovery. The sign is so far indefinite as to give scope for reasonable difference of opinion; but it is a remarkable fact that among the emperors of Rome corresponding events were happening in John's time. Five emperors had been, the sixth was reigning.

Thus we are fixed down to a definite period in Rome's history. Unhappily we cannot settle with precision what that period was from the fact that two modes of reckoning were open to the Apostle. Josephus and other oriental writers usually count Julius Caesar as the first; Tacitus and other Latin historians begin with Augustus. According as John reckons, it is either Nero or Galba who is reigning at the point of time represented in the vision. It would not, however, be wise to be over-precise in fixing so indefinite a matter.

[Roman Emperors, Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligua (Gaius), Claudius, Nero, (Galba, Otho, Vitellius) Vespasian, Titus, Domitian]

Page 125 - Wounded as if to Death - If we make allowance for the revolutionary disorder that prevailed on the death of Nero (Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, being all three at one moment nominally emperors, and spending together not a year upon the throne), and on the possibility that John, in his distant banishment, might not know at any moment who was or had been actually on the throne, we shall see, unhappily to our disadvantage, that the reigning emperor may be anyone from Nero to Vitellius — thirteen months seeing all four on the throne.

After all, our ignorance is not material. Enough if in those days we can find anything corresponding with this rapid change of heads, and this almost fatal wound with which the beast was smitten in one of its imperial heads. That head may very well be Nero. Prophecies had been for some time in circulation through the empire that Rome and its power would speedily fall. In the ballads afloat among the people was the line — "***Last of the descendants of Aeneas, a matricide shall reign,***" — pointing directly to the Emperor Nero, the last descendant of the great Julian line, and the wicked murderer of the mother who had raised him to the throne by her unscrupulous crimes.

This popular impression that Rome had reached the zenith of its splendour was greatly deepened by events happening at that time. Nero was growing yearly more brutal and ferocious in his character — intensifying the violence and anarchy of all classes of the people. Misfortunes of all kinds were happening in various portions of the empire — such as tidal waves, earthquakes, famines, pestilences. The heavens were full of prodigies. Tacitus relates that "***comets, eclipses, meteors terrified the ignorant, and were made the pretext for imperial cruelties.***"

Page 126 - The Deadly Wound Healed - Seneca, the tutor and friend, finally the victim of Nero, says — "***The world itself is being shaken to pieces, and there is universal consternation.***" Revolt had broken out in various provinces, and was especially in full swing with considerable

success in Palestine. Indeed, all the Jews were persuaded that with Nero the empire would collapse, and independence be restored to Israel. Politically the whole empire was in a state of violent agitation, and at last the stormy surges of popular wrath broke against the throne. Nero fled in secrecy, only to perish ignominiously as a suicide, or by the sword of a household slave.

Thus set the sun of the great Julian line of emperors; amid such disorder, and with so many adventurers fighting for the crown that it looked as if the State must break into a thousand pieces and the sun of Rome's imperial splendour for ever set. The unparalleled disorders of the times are well condensed in this brief excerpt from history — the three successive reigns occupied but a year, — **Galba** was hacked to pieces, **Otho** flung himself upon his sword, **Vitellius** was dragged to the common place of execution and stabbed to death amid the insults of the people. Indeed, none of them can be regarded otherwise than Suetonius names them — "**three military chiefs, who aimed at the imperial purple.**"

It is only when Vespasian, the conqueror of Judaea, mounts the throne and founds the Flavian line, that Nero can be said to have had a true successor. Then it was *the deadly wound was healed*. Josephus says Vespasian's government was the unexpected deliverance of the public affairs of the Romans from ruin (*Wars*, IV. xi. 5).

Page 127 - Boastfulness and Blasphemy - Rome at once entered on a new lease of prosperity and power; and *all the world wondered after the beast* which had so miraculously recovered from its death-like wound, and believed with a profounder conviction than before that Rome as an empire was imperishable.

"The Man of Sin, the Son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God, or that worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God setting himself forth as God."

Another feature in the recognition of the beast is the impression of invincibility it creates — "***Who is like unto the beast ? who is able to make war with him ?***" Well, history has answered that ! There was, however, an excuse for Roman pride and boastfulness. Her armies were well nigh invincible. If ever she had been defeated, it was by the interminable swamps and forests of bleak Germania, or the sterile moors of distant Caledonia, not by any weakness in the arms any faltering in the courage of her legions. Rome was, indeed, at the time of the Apocalypse, the Mistress of the World.

Lucan could write without flattery: — "***Throughout all ages, has every war given subdued nations unto thee***" (*Pharsalia*, 7.420).

Boastfulness and *blasphemy* were the habit of his mouth. True of any emperor and his generation before the time of John; but especially true of Nero. No previous occupant of the throne had been so elated with his powers, or had so dared to provoke the populace by his unconstitutional and immoral deeds. As a proof of the beastly inhumanity and unparalleled boastfulness of this man, let me transcribe a few sentences from Renan.

Page 128 - Warring with the Saints - *"Nero proclaims daily that art alone should be held as a serious matter, that all virtue is a lie, that the brave man is he who can abuse, lose, and waste everything. . . A colossal self-love gave him an ardent thirst to absorb the glory of the whole world; his enmity was fierce against those who occupied public attention; for a man to succeed in anything was a State crime. . . To deny his talent was the State crime par excellence; the enemies of Rome were those who did not admire him."*

To gratify his craving for notoriety he traveled through his empire, and entered upon all sorts of circus and theatrical contests; until at length he returned from Greece bringing 1808 crowns to prove his superiority over all the artists of his empire. The uncontrollable vanity of the man is seen conspicuously in his having ordered a monument to himself of brass in the streets of Rome; and erected at the entrance to his palace, a colossal marble statue of himself, 120 feet in height, "**adorned with the insignia and attributes of the sun.**"

"It was given to him to make war with the saints" and this work was to continue forty-two months. This period coincides with the time during which the Jewish war begun by Nero's orders, was continued; it also is the period during which Nero himself warred against the Church of Christ. He began his persecutions in November 64, and died a hated fugitive in June 68. The period during which *"he did his works"* can hardly have been either less or more than two and forty months.

The relentlessness of his persecution was commensurate with his brutal and irreligious temperament. He spoke *"in blasphemy against God, and against his tabernacle, and them that dwell in /eaven."* This man is here distinctly noted as at once the enemy of Jehovah, the destroyer of Judaism, and the profaner of the gods supposed to dwell on high. If this be not Nero, never has there been a man on earth whom it has so well suited.

Page 129 - Blasphemies against God - No doubt he entered on the Jewish war with the intention of blotting out the Jewish worship, and enthroning himself in the Creator's place in the temple at Jerusalem. Nothing in heaven or earth was sacred but the glory of his name. His earliest and most enthusiastic cult was of Cybele, the sensual Syrian Goddess, but Suetonius tells us how it ended: *Religionum usquequaque contemptor, praterunius Deae Syriae.*

Hanc mox ita sprexit, ut urina contaminaret. (56) The insolent brutality of the man is seen in his daring treatment of the temples of the gods. In order to find means to repay the debts of his extravagance:

"Treasures human and divine were swept into the gulf. The temples of Rome itself were denuded of the offerings of ages, the spoil of conquered enemies long hoarded up in the shrines of the gods, the trophies of victories and triumphs held sacred through all emergencies, which even Caesar who sacked the treasury had respected. From Greece and Asia, not the offerings only, but the images of the gods themselves were carried off by authorized commissioners . . . Nero, emboldened by the incredible submission of the world to his feeble sceptre, treated gods and men alike as mere slaves of his will, ordained equally, whether in earth or heaven, for his personal service and gratification." — (Merivale, *ut supra* vi. 177-8).

It was but a trifling step to put himself in the place of the gods whom he had deposed. Nero's first child was a daughter; but it died in infancy. At once this infant was ***"canonized as a goddess; a temple was decreed to her, with an altar, a bed of state, a priest and religious ceremonies,"*** A few months after, died Poppea his wife, killed by a kick from himself.

Page 130 - Worshipped as God - She too was made a goddess, and one of the best men in the State was executed because he denied that Poppea was a goddess. Then it was proposed in the Senate that a temple should be erected to Nero himself — **"divine Nero"** — who had risen above the condition of human nature, and was therefore entitled to religious worship. Certainly, popular adulation, if not even worship, was not lacking for this besotted emperor.

On the coins of the realm he was saluted as **"the Saviour of the World."** Out upon his tours, the people offered sacrifices by the way; and the poets of the time assured him that ***"when he repaired to the stars he would have his choice of heavens; that all the gods would suffer him to make himself supreme; and that if he did not balance himself carefully in the boundless ether, the stability of heaven would be disturbed."*** (*Pharsalia* i.50-6)

The saying of John, that *all worshipped him except the followers of the Lamb* is no random statement, but a literal fact of history. All the Roman emperors had been deified upon their death, and worshipped as ascended gods: Nero was the first to be worshipped in his life. Farrar says — ***"At this dreadful period, the cult of the emperor was almost the only sincere worship which existed."***

To such a man falls the opprobrious distinction of having been the first of the Roman emperors to war against the saints — whether of the old Church or of the new. In his reign, Paul was beheaded; and perhaps Peter crucified at Rome. He is said to have set fire to the city (64 A.D.) for the double enjoyment of seeing the glowing spectacle, and having it rebuilt in

splendour as a monument of his reign. Then, to avert suspicion from himself, he transferred the blame, some say to the Christians, others to the Jews, Christians included.

Page 131 - The Antichrist - However it was, "*a vast multitude*," says Tacitus, were brought to trial and condemned. Some of them were covered with the skins of dogs and bears, and put into the amphitheatre to be torn by famished dogs; others were nailed to crosses; others were encrusted in sulphureous pitch, and set on fire in the autumn nights along the walks of Nero's garden, which were opened to the populace that they might enjoy the tragic illuminations.

It is even darkly hinted that, dressed in the skin of a wild beast, he entered the amphitheatre and violated Christian virgins before the populace. No wonder that Nero became to Christian imagination the very incarnation of evil; the wild beast from the sea; the delegate of the great red dragon, with diadems and names of blasphemy on his brow. No wonder that he left a furrow of horror in the hearts of men, and that the surmise long lingered that such a monster might not be dead, but again appear to persecute and crush the saints of God.

The Roman conquest of Palestine is referred to in the charge that the beast blasphemes *God's tabernacle*. That is temple language; and implies the profanation of the most sacred places of the Jews in the occupation of the land.

We know that the court, the temple, and the sacred vessels were polluted or destroyed; and that the very God of Israel shared in the contempt and hatred which were poured upon his people. "*It was given him to overcome the saints*" He had divine permission to completely destroy the sacred people and to be supreme on earth. The Roman empire in this triumph was the earthly similitude of that Dragon who is the "*Prince of this world*."

Page 132 - The Persecutors Doom - The whole earth lay beneath his brutal hoof. Only the followers of the Lamb were pure from the defilement of his worship. "*If any man have an ear let him hear*." Does not this appeal show how much this book concerned the Churches to which it was addressed ? If this beast stood centuries away from those early Christian Churches, how much did it concern *them* to give heed ?

But if it meant that this beast who banished John to Patmos would in this head himself be banished; that this incarnate demon with his persecuting sword would himself be finished with the sword, then it was of some moment that those living Christians of the days of John should show their *faith* and *patience* by listening to this hopeful word, and enduring to the end.

THE TAME BEAST FROM THE LAND

CHAPTER XIII

*" Prove the spirits; because many false prophets
are gone out into the world."*

Page 133 - THIS second beast, which rises from the land, is a necessary supplement to the beast which rises from the sea. Without it the political beast would be a creature of no significance. Both of them were impotent without the dragon. The devil or essential evil, is the inspiration of the first beast, and the second is "*the guide, philosopher, and friend*" of the first. The dragon is a supernatural power; the tame beast is the incarnation of his serpentine wisdom; the wild beast is the incarnation of his force and authority to rule. If, then, the wild beast from the sea is the Roman imperial power, there should be no great difficulty with this milder beast — the prompter of its godless blasphemies.

It is beyond question a religious power, for no State can subsist without religion; and especially in the ancient world was the political power identified with the spiritual, and dependent on it for its status and existence. This lamb like beast, with its draconic teaching, is then the incarnate form of heathen Romish prophecy, the God opposing science and wisdom of the old religions standing in the service of the world power and its governor: a Church in the pay and protection of the State for the purpose of exalting its supremacy.

Page 134 - Church and State - It is the pagan priesthood and philosophy, with its auguries, its oracles, its false miracles, befooling a superstitious people, keeping them in terror of the unseen, and drilling them into servile subjection to the powers that be. In short, this Christ like, yet draconic beast, is the live brain of the empire. We need make little of the Senate, as a separate power, in our consideration of the Roman State.

That assembly did largely what the interests of religion bade it. Pontiffs, augurs, and other ecclesiastical officers were members; and as itself a sacred institution, it could meet only in a consecrated place. The Emperor was the national High Priest. The civil law was the creation of the priesthood, and bore a deep impression of its sacerdotal origin.

" The citizen was merged in the State; for the State he was born, he lived, he married, tilled his land, bequeathed his goods, he perpetuated his family. The Roman worshipped for his country rather than for himself." (Merivale, *Conversion of the Empire*, 34). So absolutely was heathenism. planted at the centre of Roman life that **no man could be a citizen, and buy and sell in freedom, unless he worshipped the gods of Rome: i.e., was stamped with. the mark of the beast.**

At times this law might not be strictly enforced; but again and again it was suddenly brought into force, and Jews and Christians expelled the State because they would not acknowledge the divinity of the emperor. At any rate every imperial coin carried the sign of heathen blasphemy; and so involved every trafficker in the acknowledgement of its truth. Priests, philosophers, and statesmen were all interested in the maintenance of this state of things for the State paid well for their support. If the emperors were deified and worshipped, it was at their instigation.

Page 135 - Magical Miracles - Every nerve was strained, every trick of magic used, every resource of demoniacal inspiration called upon, to demonstrate to the populace the actual divinity of the temple gods. Magianism had reached its climax of diabolical cunning. It was an age—

" **When so many marvels happened
That men no more marveled at them.**"

Statues walked, spoke, and eat; fire was brought down from heaven, in order to excite the populace with a fearful apprehension of the spirit-world, and a ready obedience to priestly inventions for baffling or appeasing its angry demons. The most notorious astrologers of the period were Simon Magus, of Scripture notoriety, and Apollonius of Tyana. Either of them might well typify the false prophetic system of the times; and be the "**false prophet**" of this book. Apollonius, the greater of the two, was a little older than our Lord.

He was educated in Tarsus, and probably known by reputation to St. Paul. Professing to work miracles, he endeavoured to found a new religion on the basis of them. He was at Rome in Nero's time; then we find him in the service of Vespasian, and the Flavian dynasty, until disgusted with Domitian. He is said to have pretended that he was a god; and certainly was looked upon, throughout a large part of the Roman empire, as an emanation of the Divine nature. Do we not find here many of the essential features of the Antichrist ?

This wonder working beast was particularly active in the reign of Nero. The evil conscience of this man, with the inflated dream of greatness which floated before his mind, threw him into the hands of soothsayers, prophets, magi; and for long he was mastered by a passion to learn the secrets of their arts, so as to have the spirit world at his command.

Page 136 - The Number of the Beast - Historians of the period tell us that he hoped "**to be able to control the ways of providence, and give the laws to the gods,**" but instead of "**holding commerce with evil spirits**" he was simply led by "**the advice of a pernicious crew of abandoned men and women, who were the Emperor's confidential ministers and the instruments**

of every villany." Thus did the second beast flatter and cajole the first by magnifying it before the populace, but for its own selfish and pernicious ends. But which head of this imperial beast exhibits this climax of wickedness and profanity ? *" Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666."* This little puzzle, which John sets his hearers is apt to look somewhat undignified to a grave man of the 19th century, It certainly would not bear that look to either a Greek, a Roman, or a Jew.

We have to remember that in those days numbers were expressed by the letters of the alphabet, much as if in English *a = 1, b = 2, c = 3*, etc. Every word, therefore, in Hebrew and Greek, was capable of being read as figures, and then added up into its arithmetical value Here, then, John suddenly gives a clue to this monster of iniquity — the letters of his name make **666**.

Certain expositors shrink from what seems the too pragmatical interpretation of this number by making it an individual's name. Distance lends enchantment. Seen through a haze, **666** is much more imposing than when it is prosaically tracked home to a first-century man even if he is a beast and an emperor.

Page 137 - Three Mysterious Sixes - Maurice is quite Turneresque in his power of painting objects in a haze; and he leaves this beast in the obscurity of *"a society which is a number of atoms without a centre, work without a sabbath."* Our latest commentator (Milligan) evidently is smitten with the same conception. *" Three mysterious sixes following one another !"* — *"a potency of evil than which there can be none greater, a direfulness of fate than which there can be none worse."*

Now this may be very imaginative, but it does not commend itself as very wise. What light does it throw upon the beast not already given? Does not every reader know without *" three sixes,"* that there can be no worse crime, no greater evil, than to blaspheme God, and make oneself to be worshipped in the place of God ? It seems a needless puzzle which John sets his readers; at the best, it reduces it to a very trifling trick, if he is only asking the conundrum:- *" Do you know the moral meaning of three sixes ? "*

However, John is not concerned with the moral significance of the number (although the moral suggestion of three sixes, may have prompted him in part to give the cryptogram), but with the way in which **666** will *count* into a name. The reader is not asked to imagine, or to moralize, or to reflect, *but " to count the number."* And why is he told that it is *" the number of a man"* if John means rather that it is *the number of a moral idea* ? In short, all fair dealing with the matter must treat it as *" the. number of a man;"* and this man for the time being a head of the beast in which its brutal and godless

character is being manifestly brought to light. John implies that clear and definite light on this matter will be found by anyone that with the needful understanding will search this **666** for the letters of his name.

Page 138 - The number of a Man - This, in any case, implies that this man is a conspicuous figure in the days of John. If this beast had been Mohammed, Luther, Napoleon, or a Pope of Rome, all the understanding of the times would not have shed a ray of light upon the case. A cryptogram is not a telescope for looking across centuries. It is rather a microscope to make more visible what is before one's eyes. And yet John does not wish the secret to be visible to every eye.

There is an intentional puzzle in the evident simplicity of the thing; and when the meaning is discovered the reason for the puzzle will be plain. No doubt, many readers knew that John was pointing to an emperor of Rome. Let us suppose that a Roman citizen, into whose hands an early copy of the book has come, suspects that his emperor Nero is here painted in these diabolical hues, and tests the matter by resolving his name into its numerical value according to the Roman tongue, it will not make **666**. If an educated man, he will know enough of Greek to attempt it in that language, but now it makes **1337**.

He must let the puzzle drop, no wiser; it is beyond his understanding; and perhaps for the Christian cause, it is as well. But suppose the reader has any knowledge of the Hebrew tongue (as so many of the early Christians had,) at once he will discover that **NERON CAESAR** comes out with precision, **666**.

Neron - *nun*, **50**; *resh*, **200**; *vav(o)*, **6**; *nun*, **50** = **306**

Caesar - *koph*, **100**; *samech*, **60**; *resh*, **200** = **360** **Total 666**

Many of our readers will have noticed from the Revised Version that there is a very ancient variation in which the number is 616.

Page 139 - Why this Mystery ? - It is lucky for the pretty theory of " *the three sixes* " that this number has not prevailed. It is, however, a corroboration of the interpretation given above that this number resolves itself into identical results. There was also in Hebrew use the Latin form of Nero's name, without the final *nun*; and NERO CAESAR makes 616. The coincidence becomes stranger still when we find that the Hebrew of KAISAR ROM or RUM (the *Roman Caesar*) makes also this variant, 616.

Which number is John's actual reading it is difficult to determine; but it is satisfactory to find that, in either case, the result is the same. John's finger points us to the ROMAN CAESAR, let it be Nero or some other of his immediate successors, to be determined by the facts of history.

But why does John resort to this covert way of pointing out the personal beast ? Because it was hazardous for either Jew or Christian in those days to offer any direct insult to the imperial majesty of Rome. The empire swarmed with spies, whose profit was dependent on the detection of offenders against the Emperor's majesty. To breathe a syllable of reproach was counted a crime equal to high treason. Paul, in quieter times, dare not speak out about "*the man of sin ;*" and Josephus, high in favour at the court of Rome, stops abruptly in his explanation of Daniel's prophecies, with a mysterious hint that "*he does not deem it prudent to say more.*" So John writes Nero's name upon his page; but veils it in a cypher to which few Romans had a key, while Christians could easily penetrate its disguise.

APPENDIX.

THE BEASTS, " THE MAN OF SIN" AND "ANTICHRIST."

Page 140 - WE cannot quit this lengthy revelation of the powers of evil, with which nascent Christianity has to contend, without at least a brief enquiry as to what may be their relationship to other latter-day manifestations of evil, such as our Lord's "*false Christs*," Paul's "*Man of Sin*," and John's "*Antichrist*." [We leave out all consideration of any apparently corresponding agency in Daniel, because that book is at the present undergoing smelting in the crucible of the Higher Criticism.]

It is scarcely open to doubt that Paul's Man of Sin, and adversary to all that is called God (2 Thess 2.1-12), corresponds in character with John's wild beast from the sea. They both appear at a time of declension in the Church, both are opposed to the very idea of the Divine, both claim for themselves the honours which hitherto have belonged to the God of heaven, both are instigated by Satan both are invested with or accompanied by what claims to be miraculous powers; and both of them finally "*go to perdition*."

John's Antichrist (1 Eph 2.18; 4.3) is rather a heresy personified than a personal agent. It had been prophesied before as to come; and at the time of the epistle is " already come," and busy at its nefarious work.

Our Lord's pre-intimation of false prophets, some of whom set themselves up as Messiahs (Matt 24.), differs from Paul's Man of Sin, while in general agreement with the Antichrist of John.

Page 141 - The Diabolical Trinity - We propose to show that all three conceptions are in harmony — the differences being but phenomenal, according to the local colouring of each case; and that all three are depicted in the visions of the Apocalypse.

"**Antichrist**" is the all inclusive term. Whatever is sufficiently Antichrist must exist as a trinity of evils, even as Christ comes before the world as a trinity of sacred Powers for the government and salvation of the world. Now, St. John has just revealed to us *three beasts* rising in opposition to the rule and authority of God; and it is only an insolvent mind that can fail to discern in them an evil trinity intentionally contrasted with the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The great Dragon or old Serpent is the Prince of the power of the air, the God of this world — the Anti-god that, posing as a spiritual and eternal power, aims at universal dominion in heaven and on earth. The second beast from the sea, to whom the Dragon gives his authority and power, and who is invested with supernatural honours, is Paul's Man of Sin, —

the Antichrist in the strictest sense: for he is the visible embodiment and representative of Anti-god, as Christ is the incarnation and governmental representative of God the Father. The third beast is the analogue of the Holy Ghost — (demoniac inspiration and prophecy) — imparting its powers to Antichrist, as Christ was baptized with and wrought miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit. It bears witness to the divinity of the second beast, as the Spirit of God bore witness to the divinity of Christ; and works miracles on behalf of Antichrist and his cause, as the Holy Ghost did by the Apostles in the service of the Christian Church.

Page 142 - Christ and Antichrist - These three are one. Antichrist is Satanic power warring by earthly forces, and demoniac miracles and teaching; Christ is the power of God, operating by the Holy Spirit in the world. In this unity and trinity of evil, all the evil forces warring against Christ in the coming of his kingdom are gathered up and reconciled. The contrast and antagonism are complete.

Christ

1. is a Lamb,
2. is the form of God,
3. is endued with the Holy Spirit,
4. has kingdom and authority,
5. has many crowns,
6. claims universal rule,
7. makes war and overcomes,
8. kingdom is from the Father,
9. claims the right to be honoured
with the Father,
10. is Saviour of the world,
11. seals his saints,
12. is Great High Priest,
13. leads us to worship God
because He has exalted
Christ to power,
14. has his apostles and evangelists
to preach his name,
15. was without sin,
16. was put to death
and rose again,
17. is eternally exalted,

Anti-Christ

- a composite wild beast
of Satan
with demoniac influences
has the same.
has his thousands.
does the same.
claims to be invincible.
from Satan.
honoured above God
- uses the same title.
seals his followers
is Supreme Pontiff,
is medium of glory to Satan
because he has given his
authority to the beast.
has his magicians and priests to
magnify his authority.
is the man of sin.
was smitten and revived
is the son of perdition,

Page 143 - Which shall Reign -

The Sacred Trinity.

God

dwelling in Christ

Working by Holy Ghost,

Three holy and loving personalities,

The Trinity of Evil.

Satan

dwelling in Anti-Christ

Working demoniacal arts.

Three unclean and selfish beasts.

Thus we have in these visions a perfect trinity of evil, in which is seen the full development of "**the mystery of iniquity**" working over against "**the mystery of Godliness.**" The coming struggle is to settle which shall reign eternally, and to whom belong the Earth and the Human Race.

THE CHURCH ON MOUNT ZION

CHAPTER XIV.

"Ye are come unto Mount Zion."

Page 144 - OVER against this trio of persecuting Antichristian powers is the Lamb on Mount Zion, with his 144,000 saints. These are the sealed of the tribes of chapter 7. The difference in the two visions is precisely what it ought to be according to the principle on which we have interpreted the two divisions of the book. In chapter 7. they were simply covered with God's wing as those faithful Israelites who were not to be judged with the people of the land; here they appear as the actual Church of Christ: the historical continuance of the ancient, and realization of the ideal Zion.

They are marked as sons of God, believers in the Fatherhood, and are centred round about the Lamb. All this shows us that when the history in this vision is realized, the Church is still substantially a Hebrew Church. We are not yet come to the time when the Gentile element is predominant. These are *"the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb,"* and everywhere in the New Testament this title belongs to the Hebrew Christians. No doubt there is a close identity between this vision and the beautiful passage in the Hebrews — *"Ye are come unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, &c,"*

Page 145 - **As it were a New Song** - We have no means at present of deciding whether the writer of the Hebrews is actually referring to this vision of St. John; but at all events, the vision is well interpreted of the primitive Church of Christ in its ideal purity and privileges; that Church especially in Palestine in the days of Nero and St. John — tempted by abounding sensualities and idolatries, but true in heart and life to the Lamb of God, whom they followed as their Shepherd, believing that He would feed them and lead them into his eternal rest.

While gazing on this scene, John's ear is riveted by music issuing from the upper spheres. It is the *"choir invisible"* rejoicing at the sight of this great multitude who bear the Father's name, and stand in steadfast loyalty around the Lamb. The innumerable company of angels in heaven rejoice to see so large a number redeemed from the bondage of sin and death, and from the judgements falling on the land. As first fruits, it is the promise of a noble harvest. *"They sing as it were. a new song."*

Little doubt but the host of heaven had sung songs of joy over deliverances and restorations of God's people in the clays of old. But such a high deliverance as this was new in the history of the earth, though foreshadowed by deliverances of the past. The twenty-third Psalm is an

old song, yet it is new as sung by us with our Christian knowledge of the Shepherd-King. The eighty-fourth is a new song on the Christian's lips when the " **amiable tabernacle** " is in heaven, and " **the valley of Baca** " is the pilgrimage of earth. And so this "**as it were a new song**," is the Christian meaning of the ancient promises of God sung by the angels who are learning how to interpret those songs of other days that spoke of Zion as God's everlasting love, and whose promises are more than realized in the opening of God's heaven to the ransomed sons of men, and the prospect of an earth delivered from the darkness and oppression of the dragon and his beasts.

Page 146 - *Heralding the Gospel* - That song, too, is one whose music is echoed in the Church's heart. None but the redeemed can join in it; for none else know its meaning. Even if they did, seeing that it speaks of judgement and the triumph of the King of kings, it could excite only terror in their hearts. Who among the godless can say — "***I will sing of the righteous judgements of the Lord ?***"

Only those who are gathered round the Lamb, delivered from all evil loves of self, and of the world, and consciously inspired with love to God and good feeling towards their fellow-men, are able to rejoice when God arises to shake terribly the earth. If we are to have boldness in the day of judgement, our hearts must not condemn us; and if we are not to be consciously self condemned, we must be perfected by love begotten of the knowledge of God's love to us. Hence, no man can sing this song but those redeemed from the sin and evil of the earth, and quickened by the faith of Jesus dwelling in their hearts.

"He shall send his angels with a great sound as of a trumpet."

There follows a startling episode. An angel is seen flying in the midst of heaven, "***having an eternal gospel to proclaim !***" There is something here to make us pause. Has the Gospel not been preached already on the earth ? Why should an angel be sent to make this emphatic enunciation, if, in the usual interpretation the time is the end of the 19th or in the 20th century ? Are we to hold that the everlasting Gospel has never yet been preached in any emphatic sense upon the earth ?

Page 147 - *All Nations Warned of its Coming* - The truth is, that this episode corresponds with the announcement of the angel in ch.10. that "***the mystery of God is about to finish.***" That mystery, we have said, was that **the Gentiles were to be made fellow-heirs with the Jews of the covenant and its promises.** That moment is now imminent: its coming is heralded by an angel with the voice of a trump.

It will be remembered that our Lord instructed his disciples that they should in the main expend their strength upon the Jew's, and endeavour

first to bring them into the Christian fold. The age was ripening for its harvest; and the labourers sent forth were to do the fullest justice to the children of his covenant.

The years that lay between the ascension of Christ and the consummation of the Jewish age belonged to the Abrahamic people. They were Israel's day of grace. Though Paul and others did preach to Gentile audiences, yet this was only like the crumbs that fell from the children's table. Emphatically, the Gospel was still hampered in its spread by a prime consideration for the social interests and ritualistic prejudices of the Jew. Said Christ Himself to the twelve — ***"Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel until the Son of Man be come;"*** that is, ye shall not have more than time to preach in the great cities where colonies of Jews are founded before the commencement of judgement, and the institution of the universal kingdom. Our Lord also said, in his great eschatological discourse, that the proclamation of ***"the Gospel of the Kingdom"*** among all nations would be synchronous with ***"the End," i.e. of the Judaic age or dispensation.***

Page 148 - The Gospel of the Kingdom - Strauss will have it that these two sayings of our Lord do not agree, the first having originated at a time when the current belief was that the Gospel was intended only for the Jews, and the second at a later date, when it came to be seen that the Gentiles were to be embraced. This intentionally damaging comment is founded on a common exegetical mistake.

The passage in Matt 24. is identical with the first in Matt 10.23. Preaching ***"among all nations"*** is equivalent to going ***"over the cities of Israel ;"*** inasmuch as the preaching in the former case is of ***" this Gospel of the Kingdom," i.e. "the good news "*** in that form in which Jews and their proselytes were accustomed to look for it — the coming of the Messianic Kingdom. The Jews of the first century, with that trading instinct which has never left the race, were scattered over all the habitable world.

It was the will of Christ that all these settlements should be visited by the Apostles, and every child of the covenant warned that the age was closing and a new dispensation about to begin. Thus would there be a witness given amongst all nations, which a few years at the most would enable them to verify. Judaism was to perish; yet the sublimer essence of Judaism, with a heart for all the world, would survive and root itself in the earth; that was the prophecy set before the nations; and speedily they would see whether Christ who spoke the prophecy was true and able to fulfill his word.

It is in this sense **that Paul says again and again that the Gospel has been preached in all the world;** and it is in this sense that the great

Greek father Chrysostom, much to his exegetical credit, interprets the saying in Matt 24. When this angel appears, this work of preaching "*the Gospel of the Kingdom*" is past and gone.

Page 149 - The New Age Death to Babylon - The Jews everywhere have been warned and called into the Kingdom. The *end* is come of which Christ spoke. The angel cries — "*The hour of his judgement is come*" The end of Israel's day; the harvest of the Jewish age is come. The day of vengeance is to be as well the day of the acceptable year of the Lord for the Gentile world. The judgement day is here again the day of the world's salvation. The wheat of the Church is being gathered round the Lamb into God's garner; the chaff is to be burned with unquenchable fire. The great New Age of God's Worldwide Love is now to be officially begun, and all men everywhere are called upon to repent and believe the Gospel. This angel is therefore here worthily employed in heralding the advent of the Christian Age. Another angel follows, crying: "*Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great*"

But what is Babylon ? We shall know fully by and bye. Just now it is enough to know only what is written. Babylon is confusion ! that system of error which knows no difference between one God and another; worships all alike, especially the God that is most terrible and revengeful; the system that confounds the king's prerogative with God's, as it commands — "*Let all the people worship this golden image which I have set up;*" in which men exalt their sensual wisdom and demoniac revelations above the word of God — the system that has many voices, many ways of scaling heaven, many mediators who claim a homage that is due to God alone — that is Babylon; error with its confusion and its strife, here organized and forcing itself upon all the nations of the earth.

Page 150 - Evil Sentenced to Misery - The prelude to that overthrow will be the fall of that exalted city which had most assurance of its eternity. As it is seen to fall, the Church can rest assured that heathen priestcraft with its countless shrines and magical devices, and semi-brutal gods, and shameless immoralities will also fall. The *everlasting* Gospel will burn up Babylon in *everlasting* fire. Still another angel follows, pronouncing woe against the worshippers of the beast. The same "*shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger*"

What a gathering of fiery imagery is concentrated in this passage ! How powerfully it tells of the undying hatred of evil which is in the bosom of a righteous God ! But why does this alarming denunciation come in at this point of history ? Because, as we are told, the judgement hour is come; and along with it, to all the nations there is a clearer revelation of God's righteous love.

Men everywhere are now commanded to repent, held inexcusable for the worship of the beast, and more than ever will find his worship full of gnawing pains and fiery stings; because henceforth there is a gospel for mankind, a revelation of the Lamb as the image of the eternal God — a richer baptism of the Spirit, kindling higher longings in men's souls. If still they cling to their pernicious doctrines and their sensuous lusts, then in the presence of the Lamb and his servants, their sinful lusts will burn within them as unquenchable fire, and their consciences will gnaw them like a deathless worm. Thus Christ is to rule men with a rod of iron. The gratifications of a sinful man who is face to face with Christ and saving truth must terminate in torments, whatever spurious delights accompany them.

Page 151 - Goodness Rewarded - There can be no peace for wickedness; goodness alone can make happy.

"The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

"Here is the patience of the saints" In this climax of evil, when the devil is angry because his time is short, the patience of the saints will be most severely tried; but they may rest assured that Christ is destined to be victorious. Even now He will make evil miserable, his own believing people happy; and the hour is at hand when the faith and righteousness of his saints will have their reward in the glorious kingdom of his love.

This fact is counted worthy of divine attestation. A voice from heaven is heard, saying — *"Write., Blessed are the dead which die. in the Lord from henceforth"* I crave your deepest interest and steadiest patience for a moment as we ponder over this. The passage is most sadly understood, and yet it is one of the most meaningful and consolatory in the word of God.

The whole point of the utterance lies in these words — *from henceforth*, usually passed over in silence by the commentator, as if quite superfluous, or their insertion a mistake. Clearly enough, they intimate that there is **a special point of time** at which the condition of the Christian **immediately after death** becomes more blessed than it was at any previous time. That is the whole point of the passage: missing that, everything is lost. After this point of time, *"they rest from their labours and their works do follow them"*

Before this time, death was not rest nor reward; but only a state of hope and expectation.

Page 152 - Resurrection Immanent - Do the Scriptures tell us that there was a time when the dead in Christ were not at rest, when they were not rewarded for their great fidelity, when even martyred saints, had to

compose themselves in hope ? They do. In Scripture, the resurrection is a future though near experience; and until the resurrection day the saints have "*not yet ascended up,*" nor are they "*present with the Lord.*" John, in particular, reveals the state of all the Christian dead in his vision of the martyrs, crying with troubled passion, as men who were wearied waiting for their reward.

Then, when Jerusalem is shaken with God's judgements, and the new age introduced, we are told that the time of the dead is come to be judged and rewarded according to their works. Heaven is then opened to Christ's saints ;and henceforth they worship restfully in the Paradise of God. And now, as John traces the development of Christ's kingdom from a positive point of view, we come again within sight of the same great juridical transaction. We have just read that "*the hour of God's judgement is come*" that is, the time when Christ rewards his waiting saints with their resurrection day, and reaps the harvest of the earth. Certainly, that momentous transaction cannot be in front of the 19th century. It is behind us.

Historically, it lies near the days of John. It was one of the characteristic events of the opening of the Gospel age. Such, we maintain, to be written everywhere on the page of the New Testament with the clearness of a sunbeam. The Apostles and other martyrs are not until this day beneath the altar.

Page 153 - Immediate Entrance on Glory - Hades does not now hold the Christian as its prey. The martyrs' "*little while*" is long since past; and they have been called up into the glories of the place which Christ prepared for them in heaven, where now they live and reign with Christ. From the moment marked by St. John, the finishing of the work of judgement and the reward of the dead, — the Christian man who dies goes home at once to his reward; he has no time of waiting for the heavens to open their embraces.

For the noble and holy child of God, death is no longer *descent*, to wait in the lingering Hades state; but it is *ascent* to be with Christ. "*If ye will hear it,*" this is the truth that so many have perverted into the notion of a *rapture of living saints*, caught up and curiously transformed. What Paul teaches is identical with what John teaches here, — **that after a certain point of time**, the Christian is caught up at death to meet his Lord, and so passes in a moment, without sleep or consciousness of delay, into his rest and his reward. Looking through the eyes of the Seer we shall be privileged ere long to see this blessedness realized, and heaven opened to all true believers.

THE SON OF MAN IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN

CHAPTER XIV.

"Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory; and then shall he send forth, his angels."

Page 154 - FOR impressiveness and far-reachingness of consequence, no symbol in John's book excels that now before us. To comprehend its meaning, we must look backward and also forward to what stands on either side. Immediately in front, we have three angels appearing in close succession uttering proclamations, and giving emphasis to their message by the loudness of their voice. These are the heralds of a king, marching in the van, sounding their alarming trumpets to prepare the people for his coming, and marshalling them for judgement. That is what Christ said would be the sign of his coming — *"his angels with a great sound as of a trumpet."* Accordingly we have now this vision of the King himself, the Son of Man sitting on a cloud in heaven, clothed in the glory of his Father, crowned with divinest honours. Then again, in the rear are his processional angels with sickles and vials of wrath. Is not this the thing which was spoken by our Lord: *"for the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then shall he reward every man according to his works. Verily, I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."* (Matt 16)

Page 155 - The Harvest of the Age - On nearer view, we see that the purpose of this manifestation is — **JUDGEMENT**; first, under the figure of a harvest time; and secondly, as a visitation of successive plagues. In the first symbol, the Son of Man gives the signal by throwing his sickle on the earth; but the burden of the reaping falls upon the angels. Here again John sees the fulfillment of what he had heard from the lips of Christ some forty years before in such parables as the tares and the wheat. *"The harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are the angels !"* The purpose of this reaping is described as a gathering out of God's kingdom all things that offend, and them that work iniquity, in order that the righteous may shine out as stars and give light to a darkened world (Matt 13.40-3). The purpose of this Apocalyptic judgement is identical. That *"end of the age"* of which Christ spoke was the closure of the Jewish and heathen age in which He lived; Jerusalem was to be the centre around which its main events transpired; and our readers are now in a position to well judge whether we have not found this book of Revelation agree most precisely, and without artificial manipulation, with our Saviour's teaching.

Let us now give a careful study to this picture. The leading figure is "**the Son of Man.**" There is a reason for the title under which John identifies our Lord. In the days of his flesh He had said that all judgement was committed to his hands because He was **the Son of Man.**

Page 156 - The Son of Man - That tells us that the tests of judgement can be measured by a truly human standard — that human sympathy and tenderness will have their share in determining the fates of men, since not only our High Priest but our Eternal Judge is capable of being touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and entering into all the sorrows and temptations of our case. Can we do otherwise than rejoice in such a Saviour, and look with quiet confidence upon any day of judgement which He institutes. The Son of Man is *not coming* to his kingdom. *He is a King,* On his head there is a golden crown. He is seen *"in the glory of his Father."* His people had rejected Him as the Son of the Carpenter. Forty years have passed without any change in Israel's faith, except indeed in the direction of a more reckless and abandoned denial of his claims. No curse was oftener on Jewish lips, no imprecation oftener offered as incense unto God, than the curse heaped upon Jesus, — "**THE HUNG: may his name and memory be blotted out !**" No prophecy was more boastfully uttered in Jerusalem than that God would utterly destroy the Nazarenes, while the temple and the law would prove eternal. At last, there is an answer to the challenge. The holy land is resounding to the tramp of armed men—the cities of Galilee and Samaria have fallen — the heavens are nightly lit with prodigies that ring the nation's death-knell — Jerusalem is hemmed in with troops that never weary in their savage hatred of everything distinctive of the Jew — and every circumstance is ominous with political extinction to this proud and boastful nation. Behold, at length the doleful prophecies of Christ are painfully accomplished, and Israel is irretrievably cast down from her heaven-born eminence. How else can we interpret this than as God's answer to the Jew ?

Page 157 - Christ's Coming Not Corporeal - Christ is crowned with the glory of that divinity which He justly attributed to himself; and his enemies over whelmed with a well deserved ignominy and shame. Philo had argued for the divinity and perpetual obligation of the Mosaic legislation from its endurance to his time; now that argument is meaningless. The Son is greater than the servant, — so proves his dismissal.

*" Then if any man shall say unto you;
Lo, here is the Christ or, Here; believe it not."*

Again, let us pay attention to the method of Christ's coming. It is a prevalent notion, and a most unfortunate, that the Scriptures are committed to a descent of the visible, corporeal personage of Christ, — who is supposed to have his palace and his throne in some great city;

and, as many think, in a restored Jerusalem. The notion is unscriptural, we might even say *anti*-scriptural. Its influence through these 19 centuries has been only mischievous — breeding the most reptilian sectarianism, and sneering infidelity. Here is the fullest explanation which has been given to us — Christ's final words. Surely they give us no excuse for expecting the personal descent of Christ to earth and his corporeal visibility to men. Christ is seen in the clouds of heaven. That, in prophetic language, clearly indicates that his coming is in darkness and in shadow — veiled in the tribulations of the time, the facts of Providence, the events of history, visible only to the eye of faith; and that it is from heaven his power and work proceed. It is unfortunate if we fashion any more material conception of Bible teaching than that Christ comes to earth in the outgoings of his power, the enforcement of his authority, the punishment of his enemies, and the establishment of his Gospel Kingdom.

Page 158 - Our Lord's Own Prophecy - To insist on any other mode of realizing the Second Coming, so far as this world is concerned, is to invest our Lord's great prophecy with tremendous difficulties of interpretation; it is to falsify it, or to say that the Evangelists have given a wrong meaning to Christ's words. There is no escaping the dilemma drawn up by a late professor of theology at Strasburg:—

"Jesus, in the discourses imputed to Him, does not simply announce in general that he will return on the clouds of heaven — one day, in two thousand years perhaps, or in a hundred thousand; He announces that He will return immediately after Jerusalem shall have been profaned. If the words which they place in his mouth have any sense, they have that, and if they have not, it is because, for theologians, white means black and black means white. But for whoever is not a sophist, this dilemma is set down categorically; either Jesus was deceived, or these discourses are not his. The Christian Church cannot honestly escape from this dilemma." — (Colani, Les Croyances Messianiques, pp. 251-2).

The door of honour opens only to a right conception of the nature of the Second Coming. If Christ meant to pledge himself to such a materialization and localization of his presence on earth as so many orthodox divines insist upon, then certainly that has not taken place and the prophecy is disgracefully falsified. Infidel hangers-on to Christianity rejoice to have it so, in order that its more supernatural claims may be discredited. But we can neither believe in the orthodox carnal coming, with its too apparent shifts to postpone the time fixed for the coming; nor in the mistaken Christ, or the blundering Apostles of the unorthodox. It seems to us beyond all question that Christ's figurative language is mistaken for dull prose, and even then carelessly interpreted.

There is not so much as a rag of excuse for those who have imagined a

bodily dwelling of Christ upon the earth, prophesied mystically for a day then near and from century to century postponed. Far better that Christ should not come thus. **The vast majority of the human race are in the spirit-world.** If his redeemed are with Him in the heavenly world, they will not want Him to forsake the heavens and go down to earth. Indeed, do not we ourselves count this one of the most delightful prospects of the eternal world, that having passed through death into the better world, we shall be *"for ever with the Lord."*

Page 159 - The Purpose of Christ's Coming - And for what is it that Christ is said to come ? The answer is given in different forms. At one time, it is to avenge Him on his adversaries; at another, it is to avenge his saints; and again it is to take his vineyard from servants who have appropriated the fruit unto themselves and to give it to others who will recognize his lordship; here, it is to reap the harvest of the land. It is a solemn, yea, a dreadful function, which is thus attributed to Christ; and never at any time so fittingly as at the transition from the Jewish to the Christian age can this work be accomplished. There are particular crises in the history of men and nations when the false threatens to overlay the true; when unrighteousness and hypocrisy have supplanted truth and goodness, and are ripening to a maturity that forebodes the extermination of God's kingdom on the earth, and then it is that the judging work of Christ begins. Perhaps such a reaping time as this must follow every distinctive revelation of God's truth.

There comes the time when each ordinance of God has effected all of which it is capable, and when the perversities and misapprehensions which invariably gather around it have destroyed its power and made some change of form desirable. So was it with the Mosaic Law. It had ceased to be an inspiration for righteousness; it had become a cloak for sin; and accordingly its doom had come. Its good and evil had ripened in their extremist forms; and if the world was not to perish in corruption, it was needful that the good should be conserved, and the evil broken and consumed. It is at this crisis the Son of Man appears in heaven. He is sending his righteous judgements on the earth. The good have been gathered into the Christian Church; the evil have ripened for destruction, and Christ's punishments are intended to purify the earth, and fit it for the planting of the seed of his eternal Gospel. It is now the end of a dying age, a new and better dispensation is to be begun. The sickle is cast into the earth; and proleptically, the earth is reaped.

"I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard"

Page 160 - The Harvest of the Land - A double reaping is in process. Why there are thus two harvests has puzzled many; but there is a very

simple reason for this imagery. There were two harvests in Palestine — the grain harvest and the harvest of the vines. It was therefore natural, seeing that Palestine was the scene of this spiritual reaping, and that our Lord had so frequently used this two fold figure of the harvest field and vineyard, that this harvest should have its two fold symbol. However, the emphasis is laid upon the harvest of the vintage. It is the vine of the land which is reaped.

Page 161 - Treading the Wine-press - Now, this figure of "*the vine of the land*" is most appropriate, if this harvest is reaped as we have said in Palestine. Israel is distinctly and repeatedly figured as the vine of God as in Isaiah — "*The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel,*" and as in the Psalms — "*Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt.*" That this "*treading of the wine-press of the wrath of God*" is a most likely description of the bloody wars of Rome all over Palestine in the days of John is seen by recalling Isaiah 63. — "*I have trodden the wine-press alone I have trampled the people in my fury ;*" and also the lamentations of Jeremiah over the Babylonian conquest — "*The Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a wine-press.*"

That this sanguinary conflict was worthy of being depicted as a stream of blood pouring out over the borders of the land (**1600 furlongs**) and reaching up to the horses bridles, is witnessed by the pre-intimation of our Lord that such sufferings had never before been in any land and never would be again; and also by the more prosaic figures of the Jewish historian, from which we learn that about **a million and a half of human beings** out of a population of **five million**, perished by sword and famine during the war. Besides this, Jewish blood was shed in rivers beyond the borders of the holy land, from Alexandria (in which alone were **50,000** massacred) to Tyre, then up to Damascus, and finally further north. Well might that awful harvest be represented as "*the great wine-press of the wrath of God.*" Yet God's wrath is not essentially different from his love. If God judged his people, it was to save them.

Page 162 - Judgement in order to Salvation - If the angel cast his fire upon the earth, it was to burn up the dry encumbering thorns in order that the ploughshare of the Gospel might prepare the soil for the good seed of the kingdom. If Israel's sun went down in blood, it was that all the world might hail the rising of the sun of righteousness. Renan has written no truer and more effective word in his treatment of the Apocalypse than where he shews that the continued existence of the Temple, or even of **the City of Jerusalem, was inconsistent with the worldwide spread of Christianity**, and much more so with the spiritualization of its doctrine and worship. Christ's truth could only be redeemed from Judaistic trammels by the shedding of Israel's blood.

THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

CHAPTERS XV AND XVI.

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

Page 163 - A CAREFUL reader cannot but be struck with the similarity of this fifteenth chapter to certain portions of the first part of the book. We have already shown good reason why it must be so. As the vision of the Lamb and the 144,000 of the previous chapter corresponds with the sealed of the tribes in chapter seven, so does this vision correspond with the great multitude out of every tongue in robes of white. It is the habit of this book, before any calamitous judgement falls, to show that God's people will come through it most victoriously. The 144,000 were seen on Mount Zion to signify their security while the harvest of the land was being reaped; this company standing on the glassy sea are those who refuse to worship the evil beast, and are to be preserved from the plagues about to desolate an evil earth. They stand on *that glassy sea mingled with fire*; because while apparently in the midst of judgement, they are not touched by its scorching fires, nor troubled in their souls by any want of clearness or transparency in the purposes of God.

The fact that they sing "*the song of Moses and the. song of the Lamb*" is enough to show that they are **first-century Christians, and many of them Hebrews** to whom the worship of synagogue and temple had been dear.

Page 164 - Preparing Heaven for Men - We are also clearly dealing with a time when heathenism and idolatry are rampant in the earth, and the crucial test of fidelity to Christ is whether men will offer sacrifice to Caesar. The song of the victors contains other points of identification. God is addressed as: "**King of the Ages,**" because this is the time of the end, the boundary of the old age and the new. They prophetically celebrate the coming of "**all nations**" to worship God, because they stand at the introduction of the age of God's world-wide love. ***The temple in heaven is at this time opened.***

This is the same event as is recorded in 11.19; here with fuller information. In the former case, the opening stands for the entrance of the dead on their reward; but here, while the Temple is opened, we are to see a preparatory work proceed before the redeemed are able to enter upon its glories. God's judgements are not yet finished; the vials of his wrath not yet exhausted. God's angels can dwell in the glory of his presence; they can breathe amid the fiery smoke that no man can endure; live in that brilliant light which. sends a haze upon the poor weak eye of man. No human soul is in that Temple.

No redeemed spirit has been as yet caught up to enter on its glories, for the place is not quite prepared. However, there will be no delay. God's righteous judgements are proceeding; and soon *"the dead who died in the Lord "* will be led up into their eternal rest in the Father's house.

"The coming of the day of God, by reason of which the Heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat"

Page 165 - The World's Judgement Day - The scene to which the preceding is introductory is one of unusual sublimity even for so sublime a book. Seven angels proceed from the throne of Deity, resplendent with the glare of precious stones and the glitter of golden girdles, and in their hands are bowls which contain the wrath of God. That wrath is the fervour of his love for truth going forth in opposition to Satanic error — it is the purity of his righteousness in its burning zeal against iniquity — that goodness which like a fire eats every dry branch of fruitless and false pretence — that mighty wind which scatters like the chaff every bad confederacy of men. Every reader may see at a glance a striking similarity between these **seven vials** and the seven successive trumpets of the earlier portion of the book. Evidently, we are meant to think of them as related: and such is the common feeling of interpreters.

Along with a certain identity there are material differences; easily explained by the principle on which the structure of this book proceeds. The story of the rise of Christianity must be somewhat like the story of the fall of Judaism, so intimately were they bound together. How the darkness of the night is vanquished, is not materially different from how the day was born and swelled to noon. In such a brief prophetic sketch as John's there comes a point where Judaism will get mixed up with other forces which are opposed to Christ, and indeed be so identified in a common enmity and in a common judgement, that the boundary lines are lost to view. Finally, Judaism as the youngest and weakest foe will disappear, and a stronger enemy alone be left upon the field.

Page 166 - The Trumpet Plagues - Heathenism with its kindred sensualities then remains the only foe of Christ; and the moral conflict of the age is finally fought out between the Sermon on the Mount, and the utterances of pagan oracles and priests. At the opening of these vials, we are just at that point where Judaism is already seen as broken in its power. The land is being reaped outside the city, and Jerusalem is shaken but not fully judged.

Therefore, our attention, in the main, is arrested by a rampant heathenism which is inspired from the abyss. The sphere of divine judgement is widened out, and it is seen that Heathenism as well as Judaism is to suffer from the ban of God, be even more completely judged than the system of

his ancient people. Indeed, the vial judgements are seen to fall on all the enemies of the Church of God, whether they be Jew or Pagan.

The first trumpet was a plague upon the produce of the earth; the **first vial**, more trenchant in its nature, is a plague upon the bodies of men themselves. Every worshipper of the beast is to suffer in that nature which allies him with the beast. One cannot well determine whether literal bodily ailments are intended; and sickness, pestilence, and plague to be regarded as God's judgements upon men's sins; or whether these bodily ailments are to be taken as the type of special moral evils into which the malignant infidelity and superstition of the age breakout. In either case, we shall not err far from the truth; for it seems as if history placed the fact beyond dispute that nearly all man's suffering is the consequence of sin.

Page 167 - The Bitterness of Sin - The *second* angel poured out his vial, and the sea became as the blood of a dead man. The second trumpet produced a similar effect. That may be interpreted of a time of naval warfare and commercial paralysis; or it may symbolize the stagnancy and corruption of human thought and feeling, and the perversion of the leading elements of life into sources of pollution and of death. In any case, it is a telling picture of the stagnancy and incipient corruption of the most mobile elements of a nation's life in the day of its paralysis and hastening death. The *third* angel poured out his vial on the rivers and fountains of water, and they became as blood.

The corresponding trumpet told us that the burning star *Wormwood* fell into the rivers and fountains and made the waters bitter. The meaning is the same. The ordinary joys of life are turned into wormwood and gall. St. Paul prepared the Corinthians for this time of tribulation, warning them not to marry, not to form intimate connections with the world, to sit as loosely to its treasures as they could, because such judgements should soon come as would transform the tenderest ties of life into cups of stagnant blood. Doubtless, it is like refreshing water in the oasis of life to enter into wedlock and to have joyous children dancing round the hearth, while prosperity waits on us with its golden cup; but what if **"the time is short"** until these dearest refreshments of our life are changed into blood, and our parched lips are wrung with the cry: **"Blessed is the womb that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck."** When Paul foretold such sufferings for the green tree of the Christian Church, what must have been suffered in the dry tree of an evil world !

Page 168 - A Dry, Parched Land - If we go back into that old Jewish and heathen world (there is not much to choose between them), we are in a dry parched land where no water is. Everywhere, commerce is depressed, government is unsettled, life and property insecure, family life utterly

corrupt, children a calamity, fidelity and friendship rare, and suicide ennobled as a virtue. The springs of life are dry — there is no gladness in the souls of men. The things that used to be attractions, now are life's perplexities. Men have perverted God's good gifts; and their possession has become a canker and a snare. Even the old religious faith, and the hopes of immortality kindled by the gods, have been supplanted by despair; and superstitious fears have become the very bitterest poison in the cup of life. Religious error that panders to the sensuous tastes of men, in spite of its attractions for the time, turns finally into blood, and woe to them who have to drink it.

That such punishments are quite consistent with God's goodness is witnessed by the angel of the waters. ***"Righteous art thou O Lord because thou hast judged thus, for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink."*** And the saints beneath the altar also acquiesce — ***"Yea, O Lord, true and righteous are thy judgements"*** It is wonderful indeed, to see how in every great historical period men's sins and righteousnesses have ripened into their appropriate fruit of pain or joy. The sufferings of any age on which you care to lay your finger are the natural fruit of its falsehood and its sin, according to an eternal law that knows no variableness and shows no respect of persons.

Page 169 - Day turned into Night - In such seasons of collapse, good men may be compelled to suffer death, because evil men cannot endure their testimony against their wicked ways; but the destruction of the good does but intensify the misery of those who shed their blood. ***"They that take the sword shall perish by the sword"*** — the men that shed other's blood as water, will in the ripeness of the times, have blood to drink, until satisfied and disgusted with their defilements in which once they reveled with delight.

The *fourth* trumpet was a plague of darkness; and the corresponding vial is a plague of scorching heat. It would be hard indeed to reconcile these two if they referred to physical calamities. Darken the sun, and you not only lessen the light of day, but you decrease the heat; but make this a symbol of the living experience of men, and then, while to one class truth may become obscure, to another truth may become so clear that, if it is unpalatable to their lusts, it will burn them as with scorching fire. The favourite interpretation of this vial by those who bring the visions of John down through all Christian history, is that this sun is Napoleon — and his scorching fire the rolling of his artillery and musketry. We cannot think that the apostle John and the Christians of his generation were much concerned about Napoleon and his European wars. But they were over head and ears concerned with the providential judgements which were falling upon the men and institutions which stood up in opposition to the

Gospel of their Lord; and with the lusts and passions breaking out within the hearts of their own particular generation — tending to the dissolution of society, and the downfall of philosophies and cults opposed to Christ.

Page 170 - The Heavens on Fire - Now, can we not believe that in the higher light which was dawning on that age — and with its sense of utter failure in its politics, philosophy and religion, and other attendant humiliations, — there must have been a quickening of the passions of the people, a kindling of disappointment, a sense of shame and fear, making them reckless, ***"destroying mutual love and social confidence, instigating to mutual fraud and deeds of violence, to sanguinary wars and other enormities, enough to chill one's soul to think of !"***

Yes, by no fitter symbol than the scorching sunshine can you depict the misery of the man who in the dawning light of a better age, begins to see the failure of all his life long dreams, the enormities of his evil, and stands self condemned before a light which he cannot quench as yet, and which torments him, because instead of confessing that it is light from heaven, and thanking God for revealing a goodness to which he has been a stranger, he turns his curses against God, and blasphemes his holy name. So did the men of that generation — *they repented not*, but perished in their sin.

The **fifth vial** is a natural continuation of the fourth. When under the scorching heats of hated light, men go on in evil; and instead of repenting of their sin, impute their miseries to heaven, the last state of these men is worse than the first. Paul says — ***"God will send them strong delusions that they may believe a lie;"*** which is pious language for the mental law that when men resist the truth they are necessarily misled by lies, and drift off into grosser and still grosser darkness. This language is kindred to some awful words of Christ's that we usually associate with another place than earth.

Page 171 - Hell on Earth - Take first these men with fountains and streams dried up, and still athirst; then scorched with heat; then immersed in darkness gnawing their tongues for pain, — and you have, we think, a state that is not remote from hell, with its darkness, its everlasting fire, and gnashing of teeth. The meaning of these symbols is that, in this day of judgement which had come to that ancient world, *hell was realized on earth*. Is it only by a chance co-incidence, that Renan writing of this very generation, says — ***"L'e sprit do vertigo et de cruauté débordait alors, et faisait de Rome un véritable enfer !"*** The souls of men whether heathen or pharasaic, were scorched, and parched, and so darkened by their blindness that they knew not where to turn. Such is the fate of men who reject heaven's dawning light and cling with fondness to their fallacies and

sins, even when they are lashed by them as by scorpion stings. Their only hope lay in the knowledge of the Father of Jesus Christ; but they clung to their material Messiah or their heathen sensualities, and were fated to be cast outside the kingdom into that darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The sixth vial is again a companion picture to the sixth trumpet. That was the obliteration of all distinction between the Babel and the Jewish kingdoms, — the absorption of the sacred in the secular and godless kingdom of this world. This vial correctly symbolizes, in addition, that Babylon itself is also to be overthrown in turn.

Page 172 - The East against the West - Ancient Babylon, after it had destroyed Jerusalem, fell by the King's of the East diverting the Euphrates from its channel, and entering at night while Belshazzar and his court were engaged in drunken revelries. * [**So history runs, although the story is now regarded as more than doubtful. The symbol, however, could be harmoniously worked out on the basis of the drying of the Euphrates in 2Esdras, 13.40-9**] The vision symbolizes a rising war of Eastern thought against the mystic Babylon. Strange to say, the life of Rome actually came to be infested and to have its old stern virtues undermined by a current of Eastern thought which flowed steadily in until it came to be a powerful factor in the national life. Of this Seneca complained, especially of Jewish thought. Once the West had ruled the East; but the tide was on the turn Chaldaean and Jewish astrologers were the rulers of men's destinies. The gods of the East, as older than the gods of Rome, came to be in request as the native deities failed to satisfy men's wants. At length, there were no gods in Rome more popular, with the provincials and the lower orders, than those whose native haunts were the Orontes and the Nile. Thus, a door was opened for Jewish and monotheistic thought, which Christianity was able to utilize effectively. Says Uhlhorn — "***This also was a preparation for Christianity. To the world seeking for mightier gods, was preached the true God. Men looked for a new God to the East: according to God's counsels, He was actually to be proclaimed to the world as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.***" (*Conflict, etc.*, p. 66.) The heralds of the Gospel are not unfittingly symbolized in the Eastern kings who assaulted ancient Babylon. The Apostles are notoriously "***the king's that come from the sunrising***" [**This needs thinking about carefully Ed PB**]

Page 173 - The Kings of the Earth - They march forth against the West to conquer Babylon, and make the world tributary to heaven's kingdom. They are indeed the children of the light and of the day, who will teach the darkened kingdoms of the beast to hail the rising sun. There was an ancient prophecy which said that an Eastern King should rule the world. That King is Christ; and seated on his throne are his twelve Apostles. It is

indeed a marvelous fact that we today in this distant Western isle are here to verify the prophecy of John by acknowledging the spiritual supremacy of Christ and his Apostles. We have been conquered by the Kings of the East and are now the willing subjects of the Lamb.

It is significant, however, that at this moment Satan and his beasts are invoking the brutal force of kings to war against the cause of God. Largely that warfare is directed against the Hebrew polity in the belief that with Judaism the God of the Jews will disappear from history. It had been hoped that the commandants in the provinces, and dependent kings, would have gladly seized the opportunity of the Jewish revolt to assert their independence; but on the contrary they sent their troops with eagerness to erase Jerusalem from the earth. Titus is even credited with the motive of destroying both Christianity and Judaism by his war against the Temple. ***"These two superstitions,"*** he is reported to have said, ***"although contrary to one another, are of the same source; the Christians come from the Jews; the root torn up, the shoot will perish quickly."*** Thus, literally, was the heathen military ascendancy of those days — ***"the war of the great day of God."*** And yet, while warring against God, they are doing the work of God.

Page 174 - The East Victorians - In destroying Jerusalem, they are blindly preparing the way of the Kings of the Sun rising; and hastening God's vengeance upon mystic Babylon. Christianity, reinvigorated by release from Judaic material limitations, will all the sooner begin an effective war against Roman civilisation. How tersely, and in what powerful lines, the conflict of heathenism with the truth is drawn in this vision of the frog like spirits. The Kings of the East — the kingly truths and principles of the Christian faith — are to meet in dread array the kings of the Roman earth — the regnant principles and passions of the heathen world. There is to be a war of holy and unholy principles — a conflict of truth and error. On one side will be the Lamb of God, the potency of his truth, the courage and devotion of his saints; and on the other side, a confederacy of earthly and infernal powers, ***"mixing the coarsest animal with the most subtle spiritual wickedness,"*** and using the two-edged sword of demoniacal signs in order to command the people's faith and brutal force to put to silence the soldiers of the cross.

"Behold, I come, as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments lest he walk naked and they see his shame" What can the repetition of this warning mean, but that this is the particular juncture of events for which the Church at Sardis was to watch ? In this conflict of truth with demonism and brute force, Christ is coming in his power and glory. Great need, amid the complications of these times, that the people should comport themselves as Christian men and prove worthy of spotless

garments and the crown of glory in the endless life of God !

Page 175 - The Valley of Decision - That early conflict of God's kingdom was to be on the great broad plain of *Armageddon*, the valley of decision — famous both for the defeat and the victory of Israel. Locally, and in the first place, it was on Hebrew ground that heathenism delivered its assault against the one Almighty God. That fateful struggle realized all the past associations of the plain of Armageddon in Hebrew history. Outwardly there was every sign of heathen victory. Israel was broken into pieces under heathen feet; the land was full of mourning; every family weeping for its victims, dead or gone away to worse than death. But Judah's desolation was the revival of Judah's spiritual power. Salvation was of the Jews to all the world precisely because Jerusalem was to be no more the centre and sovereign of Christian life and power. This profounder Armageddon was both defeat and victory; both of them *decisive* not only of a nation's but of a world's destiny.

The seventh and last vial also corresponds with the seventh trumpet. Then the voices of heaven proclaimed — *"The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ."* This last vial is poured into the air as if to shake the dragon's power; and then a voice comes from the throne: *"It is done."* The last stream of wrath is emptied out, the last force set in motion which shall bring proud Babylon to the dust; and the declaration is accompanied by a sign of what this vial can produce, for there is a mighty earthquake and *"the great city is divided into three parts."* Considerable difference of opinion exists as to whether this great city is Jerusalem or Rome; and certain expositors have reversed their former judgements, so nicely does the evidence seem balanced.

Page 176 - Jerusalem Fallen - This dubiety arises from the fact that all the foes of Christianity are here blended in one picture. At first Judaism stood well to the front, but now it is almost fully judged, and is receding before the advancing prominence of Babylon. This *"great city"* is not Rome; since, as the visions proceed, we find the great city which is the seat of Babylon, comparatively undisturbed. It does, indeed, seem clear that Jerusalem is in view. The judgement of the holy land has been described in this Second Part as until now falling only *"without the city;"* and it is therefore to be expected that we shall hear something of the city's fate.

Here, then, the catastrophe of judgement is complete, partial as it looks. This tripartite division of the city is apparently taken from Ezekiel's description of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. That prophet took his hair and divided it into three parts. One part he burned, another cut with a knife, and the third scattered to the winds of heaven. Said the Lord God —

"This is Jerusalem;" and the prophecy meant, a third shall die by the pestilence and famine, a third shall fall by the sword, and a third part be scattered to the winds of heaven. Such, indeed, was Jerusalem's fate in the siege of Titus. Politically and sacerdotally, Jerusalem ceased to be.

The **"cities of the nations"** might be those Gentile cities in which Jewish colonies came to grief at this particular time, but more probably the towns and cities of Decapolis, Edom, Samaria, and Galilee, called **"Galilee of the nations"** in St. Matthew's gospel. Indeed, these are distinctively called "cities of the nations" in the history of Josephus.

Page 177 - End of the Judaic World - "Babylon the great was remembered" Surely this intimation is enough to warn us that Babylon is not yet broken into pieces nor completely judged. We are to understand that only the first distinctive foe of Christianity is gone. The Jewish polity has been shaken to its foundations. Its people have been crushed beneath a plague of hail (a favourite symbol of destructive military visitations in the Prophets and the Apocrypha), the weight of each of which corresponds with the stones hurled from the **"scorpions"** of the Romans against the bold defenders of Jerusalem. **"The islands and mountains fled away"** — so complete was the dislocation of the Jewish world, so utterly did God judge it and its ways. Nothing short of a new heaven and a new earth were to follow the great day of the Lord. And no one can doubt that this judgement day wrought a revolution in the outlook of the Church. As Dollinger says — **"Christians recognized it as a providence of God, and a sign that the end of the ceremonial law was come, — that Christian doctrine was thereby completely taken out and separated from the maternal womb of Judaism."** A second deliverance followed. **"The church of Christ,"** says Mosheim, **"had at no period of time more bitter and desperate enemies than that very people to whom the immortal Saviour was more especially sent."** Likewise Neander: **"Jewish proselytes were often the fiercest persecutors of Christianity, and suffered themselves to become tools of the Jews in exciting the pagans against the Christians."** When the sacred instruments of Jewish worship were profaned, and the Jew had no longer a home on earth, his wrath might remain as fierce, but he ceased to make proselytes, and his power to wound was gone.

Page 178 - Ichabod - Isaac was more than able to hold his own with Ishmael. Solemn lesson ! The most favoured Church may become so corrupt as to be intolerable in the sight of heaven. It may slay as the enemies of God his chosen sons. When exalted to the heavens with pride, Ichabod may be written on its walls, and its prayers, its penances, its fasts, its genuflections, and its turning over the pages of its Bible, be an abomination in the sight of God.

THE HARLOT JUDGED

CHAPTERS XVII. AND XVIII.

*"Lo, I begin to work evil at the city of my name,
and should ye be utterly unpunished ? "*

Page 179 - WE must be careful to note, as we enter on the episode of Babylon, that we are not asked to look and see an actual event transpiring. Failure to mark this has led to error. John does not *see* the destruction of Babylon by the fire of the breath of God. He sees what Babylon is, and where she sits in her self-vaunting pride, and is TOLD what *shall be* her end. In visions of occurrences, John sees what is immediately to happen or what is actually in process and will soon reach its culmination; but, when he is merely *told* that anything *shall be*, the event still lies a little into the future, and is thereby marked with indefiniteness as to the time of its occurrence.

The fact that John is told that Babylon *shall be* hated of the beast and his horns, and *shall be* burned; and that the traffickers of the world *shall* mourn for her, indicates plainly that he prophesies of things a little distant and not of what is actually transpiring before his eyes. Even the note in the previous chapter — *"Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God"* is enough to show that Babylon's destruction is not actually proceeding, but is decreed and being kept in mind; and that in the fall of the great city Jerusalem (the destruction of Judaic hindrances to the triumph of the Gospel) God is preparing the way for his judgement upon Babylon.

Page 180 - Babylon - In short. God's judgement on Jerusalem is here set forth as his pledge to the Church that Babylon will not be spared. This episode, then, is intended by John and the angelic host to be *an official judgement pronounced against this second foe* and proleptically fulfilled. To faith, what God means to do is done. Indeed, as we have already said — the deliverance of the Gospel from its Judaic fetters was a sentence of doom on Heathenism. In such grand creations, the first hour is decisive.

A Gospel for the Gentiles was, in its very birth, the fall of Babylon. How are we to think of Babylon, *that great city*, *that strong city* — which is, *"Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth ? "* Expositors have for the most part confined themselves to one of three suggestions — all of which have considerable resemblance to the truth. A few have found Jerusalem concealed under the guise of Babylon; and it is surprising how well they can make certain marks of identification harmonize with the history and fate of that once sacred city.

They say, Jerusalem was the wife of God, what other city can be called an harlot ? What other city is so chargeable with the blood of Prophets and Apostles, or has so plainly ceased to be in fulfillment of this prophecy ? (The ablest word for this view of Babylon will be found by the English reader in Dr. Russell's *Parousia*) The great majority of British expositors have, however, found Babylon in the church of Rome, or the city of Rome itself as head and centre of the Roman faith.

Page 181 - Where is Babylon ? - That church, they say, is the bride of Christ; but what with its worshipping of saints and images, its idolatry of the host, its assumptions of infallibility and dominion, it is clearly marked as anti-christian and apostate, and therefore is destined to the doom of Babylon. And what have we to answer in return ? That we have no objection to find Babylon in Jerusalem. It had apostatized from God — lost its grand ideal meaning — come to worship force, and chose another God when it cried — "*Away with this man; crucify him, crucify him; we have no king but Caesar.*"

We have no objection to find Babylon in the Roman church, if it be there; and, certainly there are many startling signs of similarity. We are prepared to find Babylon in London or in Paris; or indeed, in Protestantism, with its error and confusion. Babylon is wherever we find Babylon's characteristics.

Let us, however, be sure of what Babylon's features are; for if we cannot see what John is meaning, we are likely to fall into serious and irretrievable mistakes; and to apply this shameful name to men and systems who are no more nearly allied to Babylon than we are ourselves. Now, John is not thinking specially of Jerusalem though she was tainted by the Babel spirit. That city is already judged and shaken to its base ; and after the woes which have been described, it is impossible to imagine Babylon sitting at Jerusalem in its fulsome sensuousness, cool and unconcerned.

Nor is John thinking here of an apostate Christian Church in the dim and distant future. There is not a syllable in the prophecies of this book to indicate that Christ's Church has been apostatizing up to this particular stage of history. On the other hand, the last vision of the Church revealed it standing on the glassy sea.

Page 182 - Not a Christian Church - Nor is John concerned with anything that does not exist; and that cannot afford light and consolation to the infant Church amid the unparalleled trials which beset it. At any rate, Babylon does not bear one single mark of being a Church of Christ, however sinful and apostate. She is described very literally as a city great in population, rich in wealth, given to luxury and debauchery, dealing in

horses and chariots, and keeping multitudes of slaves. So vast her population and so expensive are her habits, that she is the emporium of the world's trade. Her collapse is a serious blow to every shipmaster and mariner, and all who make their living by the sea; and her sincerest mourners in the day of her decline are the merchants who have become princes by reason of her costly tastes for precious metals, pearls, fine linen, fragrant woods, marbles spices, ointments — everything that is dainty and sumptuous to the soul of man. How that describes the church of the Vatican we utterly fail to see; or who the transformation of Roman Catholics into Evangelical Protestants would strike such a fatal blow at the trade and commerce of the world that all the merchant princes would stand aghast, and all the fleets of the nations be disbanded for want of commerce !

If that really is to be the consequence of the new reformation, will not our evangelical British merchants wish the Millennial day to be indefinitely postponed ? We come to far more likely ground, when we take Babylon to be some heathen, anti-divine organization existing in apostolic times; exercising its oppressive power against Prophets and Apostles, and standing in colossal magnitude as an insuperable obstacle to the universal sovereignty of Jesus Christ.

Page 183 - Found in Rome - If there was such a city, then the centre of the world, great in extent, costly in her habits, into which were gathered the wealthiest families of the time, a market for all the expensive luxuries of Arabia and the Indies if this city exercised its sovereignty in all the habitable world, and withal was madly anti-christian and idolatrous — then this city of John's time must have been the seat and throne of Babylon.

That Rome was such a city, there can be no dispute; and we need not wonder that when Jerusalem has just been trampled in the dust, and Judaism blotted out, the infant Church feels herself to be standing face to face with this gigantic foe, wondering if it be possible that she can survive the might of Rome. Rome answers to her marks. And 1st, *her sensual wantonness* (18.8). On this point we shall ask Gibbon to bear his testimony:—

"The most remote corners of the ancient world were ransacked to supply the pomp and delicacy of Rome.....The objects of oriental traffic were splendid and trifling; silk, a pound of which was esteemed not inferior in value to a pound of gold; precious stones, among which the pearl claimed the first rank after the diamond; and a variety of aromatics that were consumed in religious worship and the pomp of funerals. The labour and risk of the voyage was rewarded with almost incredible profit; but the profit was made upon Roman subjects, and a few individuals were enriched at the expense of the public."

Rome was full of palaces, furnished with every luxury; and built with a splendour that has never been paralleled in the world's history. Pliny says that Nero consumed more precious spices at the funeral of his wife than all Arabia could produce in any year.

Page 184 - Rome's Sensuous Religion - This reminds us that we must not fail to note how much Rome's luxury was connected with the services of religion, and how deeply *"a multitude of lazy and selfish priests,"* and the merchants interested, would deprecate the success of a religion like the Gospel, without temple, sacrifice, or sacerdotal order. Mosheim writes :— *"The public worship of such an immense number of deities was a source of subsistence and even of riches to the whole rabble of priests and augurs, and also to a multitude of merchants and artists."*

As the ascendancy of idolatry was fatally stricken, well might the merchants and the seamen of the navies that went everywhere between Britain and Ceylon be represented as bewailing bitterly the down fall of the system which made them rich.

Another characteristic, and one which cannot mark a Christian church, but marks distinctively imperial Rome, is its traffic in horses and chariots, and slaves, and lives of men (18.14). As a warlike and imperial city, and for the circus sports, horses and chariots were in great demand. The horribly inhuman condition of society may be imagined from the fact that of 1,200,000 inhabitants in Rome quite one-half were slaves — prisoners of war deported from their homes and sold — males and females brought from every quarter for the vilest uses.

From so small a country as Judaea, 90,000 were led away after the siege of Jerusalem to feed wild beasts, or work as slaves till death brought peace. So absolute was the slave's subjection, and so worthless was his life, that in one Roman household 400 were put to death because one of them under provocation assassinated his master.

Page 185 - Marks of Identify - They were sometimes cut to pieces to feed the fish in their master's pond; or to let some guest see the dying agonies of a man. In fact, they were not counted human beings in that Roman world, but only chattels on their lord's estate; and as such they were refused all share in the national worship. Never before nor since have the sanctities of human nature been so diabolically profaned.

This harlot has also slain *the saints* and the *martyrs of Jesus*. This distinction is frequently made in the Apocalypse, and not without good reason. *"The saints,"* we believe to be *"the holy people,"* or saints of Daniel, whom the beast was made to break in pieces and wear out. We see, then, that the harlot is the common enemy of Jew and Christian.

The particular reference before us is to Rome's cruel annihilation of Judaic power; and to the Christian blood in which she had so lately steeped her hands.

Again, this woman's *seat* is on the beast full of the names of blasphemy. That beast is the Roman power; or the emperor as its representative, with his claims to be "**Divus.**" The city where her palace is Rome. This woman sits upon "**seven mountains.**" Rome is often called in ancient literature "**the seven-hilled city;**" and indeed had a yearly festival in honour of the inclusion of the seventh hill in the city's boundaries.

We read that there are "**seven kings**" who reign successively, and are appropriately designated *heads* of the beast. Of these, the sixth was reigning when John wrote. That readily corresponds with the succession of Roman emperors about this time.

Again, the beast John saw supporting the harlot, "**was, is not, and is about to come up from the abyss.**"

Page 186 - The Beast that was and is not - This curious enigma is hard to solve, because many solutions have been found. Our first concern should be to see what John means. The beast he saw was Rome under that king or head in whose reign the harlot's ascendancy will have reached its climax of security, and, with the usual irony of fate, in which her supremacy will be fatally undermined. A certain mystery attaches to the person of this king ; he *was*, is not, and is about to come; he is the eighth, following a seventh, who reigns a little time, and is from the seven; and all the heathen world admires his reign. The marks of identification are dark enough in all conscience. But let us see.

A favourite interpretation with Preterists is, that this eighth is the brutal Nero, who was supposed to have escaped at his dethronement and fled eastward, and was shortly afterwards reported to be returning to claim his throne, supported by the Parthians. Beyond all question, many doubted Nero's death; and false Neros did arise and claim his crown.

We do not, however, believe that John here prophesies the literal return of Nero; much less, as some have supposed, his literal resurrection from the abyss. The most probable interpretation is, that Vespasian may be John's sixth emperor, reigning at this point in the visions, after Jerusalem has passed away.

The brief and partially simultaneous reigns of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius were the interregnum of the wound, because all this year the empire was in the throes of continual revolt. The seventh, who continues a little while, is Titus, who reigned only twenty-six months; and the eighth, brother of the seventh, who gathers up into himself the material splendour, beastliness,

and blasphemy of the whole course of imperial reign, is Domitian.

Page 187 - Nero's Duplicate - There is in the history of Domitian a fact, unnoticed by expositors, which may have led John to make the enigmatical remark — *"which was, is not, and is to be."* Both Josephus and Suetonius tell us that in the revolution which deposed Vitellius, Domitian was brought forth to the multitude, recommended to the emperorship, *"and unanimously saluted by the title of Caesar,"* after which he assumed the honours.

Titus, too, all along regarded Domitian as his partner in the emperorship, although not visibly in power. *"After Domitian became emperor, he had the assurance to boast in the senate that he had bestowed the empire on his father and brother, and that they had restored it to him."* Thus Domitian might very literally be described as the emperor that *"was, is not, and is to come"* — the abyss being named to symbolize the signally diabolical and anti-christian character of his reign.

He is thus, too, an emperor in close connection with the healing of the deadly wound, inasmuch as he is the first crowned of the Flavian line; and beyond question, was the emperor in whom the specially beastly features of Roman rule reached their culmination.

There was a remarkable resemblance between the characters and careers of Nero and Domitian; only, in the acute judgement of Renan, *"Nero had not the dark wickedness of Domitian, the love of evil for the sake of evil."* Both of them were blood-thirsty, luxurious and incestuous tyrants. Domitian like Nero had a craving to be invested with necromantic powers; like Nero he commanded himself to be deified, and addressed in letter or in speech: *"Dominus et Deus Noster,"* Our Lord and God; and like Nero, he became a violent persecutor of both Jews and Christians.

Page 188 - The Pagan Revival - The likeness between the two was even physical, and is verified by ample testimony. The common nickname of Domitian in Rome was *"Calvus Nero"* — the bald Nero. (Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.38). Tertullian calls him *"a fragment of Nero"* and a *"sub-Nero"*; and Eusebius says: *"he at length established himself as the successor of Nero in his hatred and hostility to God."*

In one thing only did they differ. Nero was little better than an atheist, and discouraged all religious ceremonies but the worship of the emperors; Domitian, like his father, laboured to revive the worship of the gods in Rome, and succeeded. *"It was the boast of Domitian that in his youth he had waged the wars of Jove in defence of the Capitol (the temple of Rome); that in a later age he had scaled the heavens for himself and family by piously restoring it."* (Merivale's *Conversion, etc.*, 32).

Beyond all question, the dying heart of Paganism was galvanised into a quicker action by the devouter faith of Vespasian and his sons. There was no actual revival of pagan faith among the people of the empire; but official Paganism took fresh heart, and posed in greater ceremonial splendour to the delectation of the Roman crowds.

It seemed as if the old Roman world had come to life again; the beast from the abyss was more aggressive; the dragon again was vigorously asserting his claim to be supreme in earth and heaven.

Even in the fulfillment of this mark — *"and goeth into perdition"*, Domitian is again a Nero. He ended his reign by assassination; and as the great Julian line of emperors closed with Nero, so did the Flavian dynasty go down with Domitian.

Page 189 - Babylon the Destroyer of Jerusalem - Last of all, John is most distinctly told that this woman Babylon is *"The great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth"*, (17.18). Mark specially the tense in which the angel speaks — that **reigneth, that now reigns**, not **"that shall reign,"** as if speaking of a distant day. This could mean none other than great Rome, which then reigned jealously and tyrannically over the empire and its many provinces; that is, by symbol, *"upon many waters"* which are *"peoples and nations and tongues,"* — a Babel multitude.

All these indications most decisively point to heathen Rome, and that is the interpretation which has found the widest acceptance among Christian scholars from the earliest times. There is a certain grand appropriateness in the introduction of the Roman power at this part of the apocalyptic drama.

The prophets of the Old Testament no sooner prophesied that Babylon would destroy Jerusalem for 70 years, than immediately their prophetic anger burst out on Babylon with the reproach that although God had employed her for the punishment of his unfaithful people, He would nevertheless punish her speedily for her sins, and reward her double for the intensity of her hatred to Jerusalem.

Correspondingly, when the Roman power has here ground Jerusalem into powder, the prophetic spirit of the New Testament turns against the Roman power, and calls it *"Babylon,"* and in the repetition of Old Testament language, declares that it too must be punished **double or its sins**.

This of itself is enough to refute the notion that Babylon is Jerusalem. But the correspondence between the Babylon of Isaiah 48. and Jeremiah 1. and 51. is to be found at so many points that the conclusion seems inevitable.

Page 190 - Rome. and Ancient Babylon -

1. Isaiah's oracle concerning Babylon is of "the wilderness of the sea." The Romish beast is from the sea; therefore Rome answers as Jerusalem cannot do.
2. Babylon "sits upon many waters " (Jer 51.13), Jerusalem's grief is that she sits on the dry mountains. Metaphorically this fits Rome, but hardly Jerusalem.
3. Old Babylon, like the apocalyptic, is a "golden" cup of the wine of fury to the nations, treading them down in her wrath; and such was Rome, but Jerusalem never was, for the Jew did not love soldiering.
4. Babylon as she destroyed old Jerusalem boasted that she was "a lady for ever," and the same boast is repeated here.
5. The threatened tribulation is in both cases for the unmerciful manner in which Babylon has carried out her mission of being a whip in the Lord's hand for the chastisement of nations.
6. This Babylon is called "a harlot," and here the parallel so far fails. Yet other heathen cities are called harlots, such as Samaria and Nineveh. Tyre is charged with fornication; and in 2 Esdras 25.47, Babylon itself is charged with whoredom. We must not think that only Jerusalem can be treated as a harlot in the Scriptures; and that therefore Babylon is presumably Jerusalem.

Babylon is constantly depicted in harlot character, and barely falls short of the name itself. These and other points of identity between John's Babylon and the Babylon of Isaiah and Jeremiah seem plainly to exclude all reference to Jerusalem; because the balance of prophecy requires that this Babylon, like the last, shall be the destroyer of Jerusalem and the enemy of God.

But why is Rome thus to come into judgement ? John is not the prophet of a new and startling politics but the herald of a new dispensation; and the standpoint from which Rome is judged is purely ethical and spiritual.

Page 191 - Which Rome is Babylon ? - Ancient Babylon was condemned for its haughty pride and its gross idolatry, and Rome its replicate is condemned because she sits in her pride a queen, is wanton in her sensuality, and acts corruptingly upon all the kingdoms she reduces to her sway; especially that she tramples with cruel and contemptuous hoof upon all that is most sacred in the worship of Christ and God. We must, however, be careful to keep in view that it is not Rome political — much less is it the Rome of stone and lime — with which the Apostle is concerned.

Rome is here considered as the centre and embodiment of heathen thought and worship; as a woman, that is a church, priding herself in finding all her exaltation and her power in her reverence for the gods and the love which the gods have for her.

She is a pretentiously religious city, a city of temples, of altars, of statues of the deities; and thus a wanton, a harlot with many lovers. Worse than all, she uses her religious sanctities as a means of perpetuating her dominion and of gratifying every unholy lust; and so she is the mother of all the abominations of the earth. Herein lies the Babel principle — the lust of dominion and worldly gain by means of religious sanctities. Religion is only a ladder to the glory of this world.

The holiest things come to be prostituted to the profanest and most infernal uses, so that the hearts of the people become utterly corrupt, even in their highest principles. And such was heathen Rome. Intense as she was in her religious fervour, she made religion a panderer to her passions; and instead of being purified thereby, her people's hearts became *"the habitations of demons, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."*

Page 192 - Rome's Fornications - One has but to look at the history of Rome to see how true it is that she corrupted all the earth with her fornications. Desiring to be the religious home and political mistress of all nations, the native gods of other countries were invited by the Roman Senate to set up their altars in the capital. In times of war, the particular gods of the besieged cities were implored to give them up to the Romans in return for a more imposing worship in the imperial city. Thus Gibbon writes, *"Rome became the common temple of her subjects; and the freedom of the city was bestowed on all the gods of mankind."*

The Roman people were thus drawn from their primitive allegiance to their fathers' God into the abominable dissipation of an ever-growing, ever-changing polytheism. They fell into the pernicious custom of worshipping at whatever altars offered the freshest and most exciting pleasures.

Not only did Rome receive strange gods, she carried her own particular divinities to other lands; and thus intensified the worst evils of idolatry throughout the world. Especially did she force upon her provinces the worship of the emperors; and even Rome herself had a temple erected to her genius, and was worshipped in every loyal province. This idolatrous propagandism was part of Rome's settled policy as a means to the subjection of the world and her own ascendancy. She attributed to this recognition of all the gods, her particular right to reign as queen.

"Every distinct nation worships its own country gods; we Romans all of them; thus, while we perform the religious rites of all nations, we deservedly

enjoy universal empire," — [Octavius of M. F., 6.]

Page 193 - The Goddess Roma - There was but one God whom the Romans would not worship, for whom the public revenues would build no temple, one God who was despised and hated, — the God of the Jew and the Christian. Do you wonder that this imperious city, vaunting of its religious spirit, boasting of its pantheon of false gods, exalting itself as the goddess ROMA to a place among divinities; and then turning upon the holy harmless preachers of the cross to destroy them and proscribe the name of Christ, and perpetuate the abominations by which it lived, — do you wonder that on it should fall the anathemas of heaven, and that the struggling infant Church should have been comforted with heaven's own assurances that this great system of iniquity should totter to its fall and be utterly consumed ?

And whence comes Babylon's destruction ? It comes from God; it comes from the kings of the East, the surely growing power of truth in the new dispensation of the Gospel; and it comes from the people over whom she reigns. The nations of the earth — the diverse peoples of the Roman world, grow weary of the harlot and her pollutions. The provinces had always maintained a higher morality, and a purer religious spirit, than had Rome. They first felt the awful burden of the idolatrous system which had obtained; and were the first to break away from the religious domination of Rome. But even Rome itself at last grew sick of the hateful system that ruled its life, and was happy to be free. But this deliverance did not come without a struggle.

Page 194 - Rome's Destruction - The first instinct of Rome's dependents, entranced by the mystic glamour of Babel error, was to support the central power, and war against everything which threatened to dethrone it. It was a bitter disappointment to the Jewish revolutionary leaders that neighbouring provinces, whom they expected to pant for freedom, and to be ready to take advantage of Rome's political disorganisation to strike for independence, rather manifested sympathy with Rome and hatred of the Jews.

The soldiers that should have swelled the ranks of liberty, flocked to Roman standards, eager to assist in putting down revolt. So much was the Jew hated and isolated in that ancient world. Nevertheless, Jerusalem was to conquer, under the guise of its defeat. From her went forth subtle influences that the intensest bigotry could not resist. The chaos of heathen thought presented no united front to the solid onset of a more ideal Judaism, and the diviner "*truth as it is in Jesus.*"

The best thought of the provinces was weaned from its heathen bent. Polytheistic harlotry was discovered in all its naked vileness; and from

every side there arose a spirit of intense antagonism to the darker features of its cults — until at last, even when it had reigned supreme, it died and passed away. *How* magnificent is the contrast here between this wanton Babylon and the New Jerusalem, the chaste religion of the Gospel. The kings of the Roman world make Babylon naked and burn her in the fire of their wrath, when they come to discover that she works only misery and oppression in their midst; while all the kings of the earth become nursing mothers to the Church, and bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. Yes, all wanton love turns at last into fury and hate.

Page 195 - Decadent Heathenism - There is that in the Babel system which leads to discord, strife, and death. Evil is ultimately suicidal. Though men bind themselves with oaths into brotherhoods antagonistic to the divinely appointed order and progress of society — thank God, such brotherhoods are not permanent by reason of the disintegrating character of evil. Truth is not at every moment mightier than error; but in the end error falls to pieces by its own repulsions, and then truth triumphs on its ruins.

And Babylon, the fortress of decadent heathenism, the eager searcher for new gods, and debaucher of the nations with a multiplicity of idols, in spite of her pomp, her pride, her wantonness, her lust of conquest did fall and her ancient glory pass away. There is no more telling witness to that fact than that on the spot where apostolic blood was shed there stands the most magnificent place of worship in the world, and that in that harlot city one who, rightly or wrongly as it may be, was named the representative of Christ, came to sit in that imperial chair from which a heathen Caesar ruled the world in the name of all the gods. And so every Babylon will fall in turn; and men, grown wise through their experience of evil, will learn that there is no prosperity or joy on earth but in God and his salvation.

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER & THE VICTORY OF THE WORD OF GOD

CHAPTER XIX.

*" As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride,
so shall thy God rejoice over thee."*

Page 196 - JOHN has not seen Babylon consumed. It is rather a future victory of which he has been assured. It is, however, a result contained in the very advent of the Gospel. The effect is hidden in the cause; and thus already, by the angels, and all the heavens, Babylon is seen as fallen. While John is full of enraptured amazement at this prophecy, he hears a burst of heavenly voices rejoicing in the righteous judgements of the Lord. We know that when heaven rejoices it is not because earth is cursed, and the area of its sorrow widened. Rather is it because whatever may corrupt the earth is judged and whatever may cause sorrow and oppression is sentenced to be cast clown and broken, in order that God's kingdom may be more fully realized in the hearts and consciences of men.

These rejoicings could not take place over any merely mortal city. Mere political overthrows have little bearing on the moral history of the world. We must not bring heaven down into the paltry politics of Whig and Tory; or dream that heaven is largely interested in the transference of trade from Rome to Constantinople, Venice, London, or New York.

Page 197 - The Marriage Supper - When, therefore, we are asked to see that great city of apostolic times, imperial Rome, in the Babylon of St. John, the reader will understand that such a city shaped itself to John as the very impersonation of the heathen spirit, and as a standing challenge to the Gospel's claims to be the only true and universal religion, and Christ's own claim to be die King of kings. There could be no revelation of Christ in his glory, no claim to bring the world its righteous king, without the distinct assurance that Christ would in due season

*" Tread the idols in the dust,
Heathen fanes destroy;
Spread the Gospel's Holy trust,
Spread the Gospel's joy !"*

Suddenly, John hears a fresh outburst, apparently of all in heaven and on earth, in sympathy with the advent of the kingdom of God on earth, rejoicing over the approaching marriage of the Lamb with his bride the Church. It is somewhat disappointing that such a beautiful and promising conception is not wrought out in the visions of this book. We have only an intimation meanwhile that the marriage hour is come. Even this problem is

left unsolved — Does the marriage scene occur on earth or is it placed in heaven ? Our answer is — It may be in both worlds, because the Church in heaven and on earth is one. This marriage may have some real significance on earth. Those bright and festive robes may well typify the Church which has faithfully answered to the call — ***"Come forth, my people out of Babylon."*** The Church, we shall suppose, in her early zeal makes a perfect separation of herself from every false and evil way of that Babel system by which she is encompassed.

Page 199 - The Bride of God - When the smoke of Jerusalem's judgement is cleared away, the world sees this little company of saints gathered around the name of Christ, worshipping Him as seated on God's throne, and as having won a triumphant victory over the evil power. Did this not also put peculiar emphasis upon the Church's own divinity, clothe her with the graces of her husband, identify her with the heavenly destinies of her Lord ? Now she has come forth from the obscurity of her virgin days; she is no longer confounded with the beggared Jew, but is seen to pass into the palace splendours of her marriage with the King of kings. Clothed was she in mean and humble garments while Judaism sneered, and asked —Where is the sign of his coming ? and Heathenism proudly stalked abroad in all its glittering pomp; but when Christ was seen in his divine ascendancy over human and infernal foes, the Church appeared in all the grand significance of her relation to the Eternal One. The time was come for Zion to put on her beautiful apparel and shine with all the light and glory of the Bride of God.

But who can those be who are ***"bidden"*** to the marriage supper ? The difficulty has been felt — Are not those who are bidden ***"saints,"*** and yet they do not appear to be the Church, the bride ? Let us not press the figure quite so tightly. Those ***"bidden"*** will be witnesses, at least, of the glory of the bride and her beloved. Now, as the marriage of the Church can only be beheld by the eye of faith; the blessedness here spoken of will be the happy fortune of those only who can discern at this particular time, the Church's wedded dignities.

Page 190 - Those Bidden - In short, those bidden are those who see that the Church of Christ is indeed the bride of God; a divine dispensation of love to men. These will unite themselves with the Church and ultimately enter on eternal life.

Of course, the Church beyond the veil will realise this marriage in a much more realistic sense. Is it not possible that this ***"fine linen bright and pure"*** is akin to the white robes in which we saw the martyr spirits arraying themselves in preparation for the coming of their Lord ? Is this marriage day not after all to them what we prosaically call ***"the resurrection"*** — the

coming of their affianced Lord to lift them from their low estate and make them partners with Himself in the glory which He has with the Father ? The place in heaven has been prepared; the bride sits down upon her husband's throne.

There is much here that reminds us of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins; and from that we mentally swing to the vision of the risen and reigning saints, who have the first resurrection. Married union with Christ is the close and intimate life of the risen saints. Those *"bidden"* are spirits who are **ready and worthy** to share in *the first resurrection*. Those *not bidden* are the rest of the dead who do not live as yet with Christ, — who *"cannot enter now."* There is a wonderful harmony; and this may be the actual significance of the marriage feast, for John plainly tells us that the resurrection of the saints and the reign with Christ take place at this point of time. No wonder that the heavens rejoice — as the redeemed enter on their grand inheritance, and the Church on earth is seen arraying herself in beauteous apparel, and realizing her eternal unity with the Son of God.

Page 200 - John's Fellow-Servant - All this is significant of the departure of long reigning fallacies, and widely corrupting iniquities from the earth; and of the nations coming to the feet of Jesus to be taught and healed. With universal shouting's they exclaim — *"Let us be glad and rejoice for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."*

The infinite relief with which John heard the news of this near and blessed consummation of his hopes for the Church is well expressed in his instantaneous prostration at the feet of the nameless one that assured him of its truth. It was some spirit near him, closer in sympathy than an angel from the heavens, a fellow servant from the human race, one of the prophets who reckoned himself, as well as John, a witness for the truth of Christ. The spirit of his prophecies in the days of old was a testimony to this very Christ who now initiates this Messianic age.

The dead are not like a burnt out wick; nor like men that dream in sleep; nor is their life what Martensen describes as that mere *"esoterisches Leben in sich selber leben,"* or *"self-brooding,"* which is sometimes credited to the Hades state. Here we discover that the Church in the unseen, before the resurrection life, is in living sympathy with the Church on earth, keenly conscious of its struggles, intensely interested in the consummation of its reign.

"The Lord Jesus from Heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God."

Once more we come directly upon the person of our Lord. John sees him riding on a white horse arrayed in garments red with blood, and crowned with many diadems.

Page 201 - God's Word at War - The revised translation prefers to read that his garment was "**sprinkled**" with blood. That is the reading also of Origen and the translators of the Syriac and Ethiopic versions. It would, therefore, appear that John has Isa 63.3 in view; and the blood is consequently that of his enemies. This revelation is the same in character as the reaping scene of the 14th chapter; only here it is a judgement of the heathen as yonder it was of the Judaic world.

Christ's present office is the twofold one of judging and making war; and as John here exhibits it, it proceeds for a considerable space of time. To judge is to separate good and evil in the minds of men; and to make war is to combat with evil until it is destroyed. The just severity of his reign and his implacable enmity to evil are well-expressed in those two characteristic sentences — "**He shall rule the nations with a rod of iron; and He treadeth the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God.**" These are terrific words, and awake suggestions concerning Christ to which happily we are not accustomed. Have we any reason to suspect that John is here allowing his own subjectivity to colour his vision of the Saviour ?

Is John still the son of thunder who would call down fire from heaven upon villagers who refuse to receive his gospel? Perhaps, indeed, he is; but any way, this description of Christ's reign is most appropriate to the necessities of that hateful old Roman world. "**He shall rule them with a rod of iron.**" In some respects the imperial Roman government was tyrannical and severe; but from a moral point of view, it was loose and easy to a degree.

Page 202 - Christ's Righteous Rule - The Caesars never intruded on the privacy of the citizens, nor took means to repress free thought. Merivale says:— "**It was generally deemed sufficient to divert the interest of the people from public affairs by supplying them with a constant variety of employment or dissipation, to amuse them in their casual bursts of anger by the sacrifice of some object of their aversion, to soothe their discontent by redoubled largesses, to allay their alarms of plague or famine by the more extravagant shows and massacres in the circus.**"

The same looseness was prevalent in religion. It was lawful to worship any god or all the gods of the Pantheon, so long as the national worship was not abandoned. Religion at its best was a due observance of sacred ceremonies, and was totally divorced from truth and purity in daily life. Such was not to be the law of Christ. His authority would be all pervading and obtrusive — even into the domain of private thought.

His law not only says — Thou shalt not kill; but also, Thou shalt not hate. He not only forbids adultery, but the sensual look. The common indulgences of heathen life are abhorrent to the law of Christ; and this new

King will secure obedience not by pandering to men's lusts, but by constraining them to obey the behests of truth and righteousness. In His kingdom, the gods shall not be made down to the measures of men; but the one inflexible law will be: ***"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."*** The other function of this heavenly ruler is ***"to make war"*** The issue is described as full of horrors. We are in the thickest of the carnage of a dreadful battle-field; and the air is dark with birds of prey that come to feast upon the dainty flesh of men.

Page 203 - The Gospel Warfare - We must not freely take for granted that all this bloodshed is an allegory. Alas, history will refute us if we do, on almost every page. The garments of the Gospel are besprinkled with the blood of friends and foes. The truth of one God, and one Christ, has not triumphed without the gathering of hostile nations, and the deluging of fields with blood. Kings have gone out into battlefields to war with Christ; and without victory in war, the Galilean could not have conquered the kingdoms of this world for God. But for the bloodshed and suffering of the nations in the march of truth, Christ is not responsible.

His chosen weapons are not carnal. His sword is the word of truth. His armies are the prayers and inspirations of his saints. He wars not against men, but evil principles; and if kings and emperors were content to abide by the challenge which truth throws down to error, then the triumphs of the Gospel would be the victories of peace. It is, indeed, a painful sight to see Christian men warring with the canon and the sword — ***"giving their brethren to be food for the fowls of the air;"*** but there is this consolation, that out of every Aceldema there will be a noble resurrection of new truth, or holier influence, or fresh kindled zeal. Where conflicting hosts are slain, there also will be slain some beastly lie, some foul ambition, some accursed power, that was tending to destroy the peace of earth, or the very souls of men.

*"God's world has one great echo.
Whether calm blue mists are curled,
Or lingering dew-drops quiver,
Or red storms are unfurled,
The same deep love is throbbing
Thro' the heart of God's great world.
" Oh. God ' man's heart is darkened
He will not understand,
Show him thy cloud and fire,
And with thine own right hand
Then lead him through his desert
Into thy holy land."*

Page 204 - The Victory of the Word - Let us not forget who is to win this victory: *"The Word of God"* Perhaps it was from this vision John first learned the secret of this name. *"The Word of God"* — significant of clearest light with a background of profoundest mystery. So much we can understand, for the Word is the expression and form of truth; but so much we cannot understand, for *"no man hath seen God."* Christ only knows the full significance of this name.

It is too extensive and intensive for us to fathom it. This much we know — God is Light without darkness; Love without hate. He goes forth to war with beast and liar — with brutality and error. In this vision, we see the beginning of the conflict in the beginning of the Gospel ministry to the heathen world; and symbolically we see the end.

The Word goes forth to war with evil; to slay error, to explode every fallacy that crushes men; to break up every tyranny which is inimical to the full development of what is best in human nature. If the progress of the truth and the avengement of fallacy and wrong involve bloodshed and its attendant horrors, let us mourn for the perversity of blind and sinful men; but let us feel assured that God moves on his triumphal march through history, and that every century sees some curse abated and some young trees of liberty and righteousness planted for the healing of the nations.

SATAN BOUND - THE MILLENNIAL REIGN

THE JUDGEMENT OF THE DEAD

CHAPTER XX.

"No one can enter into the house of the strong and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong; and then he will spoil his house."

Page 204 - TIME scene before us does not come unexpectedly upon the reader. Indeed, it may well be asked:

Should not the first strategical movement in this war have been the capture of Satan and his ejection from the earth ? It will be found that the actual order is the divine method. The struggle between good and evil is depicted in figures of physical warfare; but we clearly see that we are looking on a moral contest in which God respects his creatures' wills and overcomes them by the persuasive force of truth and righteousness. The Devil can be ejected from the earth only when men learn to love the truth, and are willing to be subject to its power. Therefore, the more visible enemies of righteousness are first overcome. The Church has an important share in the heavenly victory. The binding of Satan is intended to express the restriction which the advent of Christ to power, and the spread of Christian truth put upon the manifestation of demoniacal power, so prevalent in the first century.

Page 206 - Satan Bound - It is not easy for us to put ourselves in the places of those early generations. We cannot feel how real Satanic action was to them; nor even well imagine what diabolical shapes it took. We know, how ever, that it was *"the hour and power of darkness"*; and from this book itself that the Devil had come down to earth in great wrath (12.12) in order to crush the infant Church.

Let us go back a moment. What did we read on that occasion? That the Devil knew that he had *"but a short time"* in which to meet the crisis of the war between heaven and hell. Here then we have a test of the principle of interpretation we have followed. every system which makes hundreds or thousands of years to pass between the ascent of Christ and the binding of Satan must be false; and false in the face of evidence that amounts to demonstration. The binding of Satan at the close of his short struggle for ascendancy, we have the right to say is, the restraint put upon demoniacal influence by the growing ascendancy of the Christian Church — and largely, perhaps, that Church in the invisible world. Heathenism itself about this time bears witness to the growing silence or the growing falsity of its oracles. The Church was in gleeful spirits over its hold on demoniacal manifestations. *"Men dwelt with exultation on the power which*

their prayers and the utterance of the divine name, and the laying on of hands, had to drive the demon howling and blaspheming from his usurped abode." — (*Demoniacs*, Smith's *Dic. of Antiq.*). Tertullian asserts that the Christians had become essential to the safety of Roman citizens: "*We could ruin you only by dividing from you. If we retired, who could deliver you from those insulting spirits, those disguised enemies that torture and discompose your bodies*" - (*Apology*, 49.)

Page 207 - The Saints in Power - This common power of the Christians over demons was the current crucial test as to whether Christ or Satan was supreme; it was the sign that the age of demoniac heathenism was on its dying bed; that a new age of divine power was begun — the Kingdom of God and his Christ.

" They that are Christ's at his coming."

We cannot be surprised at what now follows, viz., that John should see thrones, and the saints who have passed through death reigning in their resurrection life. According to what we have found in previous visions, we ought to come upon a scene like this — the symbol of the Christian age begun on earth and the heavenly reward of the faithful. It may be a surprise to some to be told of a resurrection of the saints occurring in apostolic or sub-apostolic times. Nevertheless, such is the time appointed for the resurrection by the uniform teaching of the Scriptures.

Indeed there is nothing new in this revelation given to John. Paul before taught us that "the saints shall judge the world." Every Gospel and Epistle tells us that Christ is *about* to take his power and reign, to judge the living and the dead, to raise his saints to kingly power. John just sees these promises accomplished. This unanimity of teaching ought to compel our faith and to confute those interpretations which throw all this into the indefinite future.

WHO ARE THESE RESURRECTED ONES? There are exegetes who resolve the whole transaction into a figure of speech — a resurrection of the martyr spirit in the Church on earth; others spiritualize it into the Christian or regenerate life.

Page 208 - Who are raised from the Dead ? - Poor thin refinements utterly unworthy of the grand occasion ! Here is summed up the grand result of the struggle of Christ with Antichrist and Satan — the outcome of redemption, and it can mean no less than actual immortality and glory to the saints of God. Others find here the actual resurrection, some of *three* classes, some of *two*, and some of only *one*. Most clearly, there are neither THREE nor ONE, but TWO. There is no word here of "*caught up and transfigured earthly saints*." John sees on thrones "*souls*" — that is, persons separated from the body of flesh; and these persons of two

classes, differing however only in the degree of bitterness which their fidelity to Christ occasioned. The one became martyrs for their faith; the other escaped through the great tribulation, — all of them ***"faithful unto death."*** These two classes necessarily embrace all the Christian dead of apostolic times; therefore, we have here all who up to this point of time ***"had died in the Lord."*** They at this moment enter on their rest; become caught up into glory to be for ever with the Lord.

Where do they live ? Not upon the earth. There is not a line in the vision to lead to such a notion. They are with Christ; and seen by John in heaven, along with heavenly armies, warring with the sword of the word, against demoniacal powers, whilst the destiny of the conquered is the lake of fire and brimstone. Matthew Arnold complains that the ***"Apocalypse replunged religion into the materialism"*** out of which Jesus had laboured to deliver it.

Page 209 - Christ's Coming Visible and Personal - No book ought to have a more spiritualising influence upon the Christian faith. Here is John carefully explaining to the primitive Church that if any of them cherished carnal hopes from the second coming of their Lord they would be woefully disappointed; and yet this carnal idea reigns in the Church to-day, creating a very carnival of confusion — a new Babel — and issuing in serious mistakes in Christian doctrine, not to speak of it breeding confederations whose whole atmosphere is polluting to the inward life. ***Christ's return is VISIBLE and PERSONAL; but NOT EARTHLY and MATERIAL. "I will come for you,"*** He says, ***"that where I am, there you may be also."***

This clearly is the pledge of a *visible* and *personal* return. So is the angelic saying on the mount of ascension: ***"This Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven."*** But mark that it is the Apostles who are to behold Him in this manner. He is to return to them. They however have been distinctly told that possibly all of them, with perhaps the single exception of John, will be dead before the time of his coming; and they must have understood that they were to see Him come for them wherever they were when dead. How this promise can fairly be transformed into a corporeal descent into the earth in the 20th century is a mystery to the present writer.

The coming of Christ to this outer world is but phenomenal and dispensational, in the signs of a providential judgement and a quickened Church. These are the tokens of his reign; that is, of his heavenly power, his true divinity, his functions as Saviour and King of men. The risen saints live with Christ in the glory of his Father.

Page 210 - The Reign of the Saints - WHERE DO THEY REIGN ? Christ reigns on and from his throne in heaven. He ascended up to the seat of power; to the centre of the sentient and spiritual universe; and from thence

his power proceeds. It seems to be a jejune and trivial conception that Christ must descend and reign like an Eastern prince on earth. It is falling back upon carnal notions; upon the rudiments of this world, plainly renounced by Christ when he refused to be a King, and taught the Jewish people that by no outward ordinances or dragooning, or sensuous splendour issuing from a local source, was the Kingdom of God to come. Christ reigns in and by his Church.

When Satan was cast down the kingdoms of this world became God's and Christ's; or in the language of St. Paul (1 Corth 15.24 the Son delivered up the kingdom to God the Father The authority usurped by Satan was wrenched from his wicked hands and delivered back to God, and over this restored kingdom God and his Christ shall reign for evermore, — Christ the active personal force which guides its course, subject always to the infinite and eternal Father whom no eye but Christ's can see.

This restoration of the kingdom involved the destruction of the last enemy, viz., death — in the resurrection of the saints to reign with Christ. The government of Christ is not dissociated from the elevation and sovereignty of humanity. Christ triumphs over Satan only as men triumph over evil by their faith. His sovereignty implies the sovereignty of man, the regeneration of our hearts, the rule of God in the conscience and life. The sovereignty of the saints, in its ultimate form, may have its offices of rule over the cities and kingdoms of a human spirit world infinitely vaster than this Monacoan principality of a world; but certainly we must not despise the posthumous influence of the saints on earth.

Page 211 - The Nature of the Resurrection - There is a sovereignty exercised by many of the departed saints which certain living saints would give kingdoms to possess. Do not the Apostles reign with Christ ? Is it not said sometimes that the authority of Paul within the Church has deposed Christ from his throne ? Do not our prophets say:— ***"Paul is now coming to an end of his reign"*** (Renan), because the sharpness is wearing off our Protestant theology, and modern thought is going back more than formerly upon the person and words of Christ ? All this, with the respect so justly due to the martyrs and fathers of the early Church, is no mean fulfillment of the saying — ***"they live and reign with Christ."***

IN WHAT FORM DOES THE RESURRECTION TRANSPIRE ? Let us be done with the mischief which arises from the prevalent notion that resurrection is some form of re-incarnation associated with the graveyard and the cast off flesh. We are on a false track when the heart of **"resurrection"** is the idea — **"re-embodiment."** Resurrection is not **"rising again"** as if of something formerly recumbent. It is essentially

"**upstanding (anastasis);**," and properly implies place, position, power, in the Kingdom of Heaven, In its ideal sense, it is the inheritance of the saints alone. They only are "**worthy to obtain the resurrection of the dead, and are equal to the angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection**" (Luke 20. 35-6). In a looser and inferior sense, all men are to have an "**upstanding**" in the unseen world; but the "**standing**" of the wicked is on so low a plane as to be hardly worthy of the name.

Page 212 - The Thousand Years - The question — "**With what bodies do they come ?**" is entirely aside from the fact of resurrection; and whatever answer may be give must not confound resurrection with re-incarnation materiality, and sense and time. The resurrection of these saints indicates no particular change of form, and certainly no transaction which brings them nearer to the earth. John had seen some of them beneath the altar and now he sees them in a higher sphere and sitting upon thrones. That is the essential fact in resurrection. What has happened in the interval The Lord has descended with the shout of a victor with the keys of Hades, for his waiting saints and has led them into the Kingdom of Heaven.

They were caught up into heaven — underwent "**the rapture of the saints**" in those seraphic bodies with which the indwelling Spirit of God had clothed the mystic shrine of personality.

HOW LONG ARE THE SAINTS TO REIGN ? "For ever and ever." The thousand years is the usual period which Rabbinical theology assigned to an as or dispensation, and does not limit the reign of the saints; but only marks the period of a fresh Satan outbreak (unsuccessful) against Christ's kingdom This thousand years period has proved a stumbling block to many students of New Testament prophecy Some feel strongly disposed to place but little weight upon this prophetic annunciation because it is the or place in Scripture where a 1000 years are spoken as an apparent limit to the Messianic reign. Others cannot see that the teaching of this chapter is in harmony with the rest of Scripture (for example, Beet *Symposium*, 26-35), especially in the interval which it is supposed to place between the resurrection of the good and bad.

Page 213 - The Millennium No Utopia - All this apparent confusion only shows that many of our exegetes have not yet found the key which unlocks this important doctrine and harmonises Scripture teaching. As to this thousand years limitation, John neither tells us how he obtained this information nor betrays its motive. It seems, however, to be inserted here simply as a note of warning to the Church. If the vision of an endless unbroken reign of holiness alone had been presented, false hopes would have been raised, only to be dashed in bitterness to the ground. Indeed, otherwise sensible men, in spite of the warning here so plainly given, have

entertained most foolish and unwarranted dreams about this period of the Church's history, and failing to find their imaginings realized, assert that this millennial period is still to come. We believe the millennial term is introduced, not to encourage such Utopian dreams, but to check them. A long period of growing power and extended victory is said to lie before the infant Church.

This 1000 years will not be a battle for existence — that is fought at the beginning of the Christian age and won — but it will be a period of incessant and successful work for the extension of Christ's kingdom. However long these stretches of prosperity, evil will still exist upon the earth, and the peace will at times be broken. The beast and the false prophet, enemies of the infant Church, will be *"gone to perdition;"* Satan will be bound and cast into the abyss; but the evil seed sown broadcast in the world during the age of Satanic ascendancy still grows and flourishes outside the Church, stretching over many a distant continent and shore.

Page 214 - Gog and Magog - Even after a 1000 years, there is a multitudinous heathenism which the Church's agencies have not reached, and its existence will be a standing menace to the cause of Christ. Whilst heathen men are on the earth, there is a danger of their characters becoming so Satanic that once more they are in mental touch with hell, and the abyss again is opened, so that Satanic thought and demoniac powers swarm into human life and fill it with such devilish potency that the very Church of Christ is menaced, and old times when heathen influences surged like waves around its walls come back again. With such a state of things there might even be a revival of the pagan spirit in the Church itself John warns the Church against such possibilities of invasion.

That any such danger could exist against a Church of resurrected Saints, with a Divine Christ visibly reigning in the midst of them, after a thousand years triumphant possession of the earth, is an imagination almost too preposterous to enter the human mind. Only a reverent and docile belief that such is taught in Scripture can keep an idea so essentially insane alive. John's thought is infinitely far from such an imagination, and it ought for ever to be dismissed. The Seer describes the future of the infant Christian Church on earth, whose history is concurrent with the reign of the saints in heaven. It will have its recurring out breaks of Satanic evil; it must never lull itself into a false security because half a world is Christianised. So long as Gog and Magog, heathen peoples, are allowed to exist on earth, there will be Satanic invasions of the Church. It is impossible that the gates of hell can prevail against it.

Page 215 - The Camp of the Saints - The fire of the Word of the Lord — the brimstone breath of his righteousness — issuing from the altar, will

repel the foul invaders that would desolate her hearth; and in some more distant day the devil's work will be utterly undone and consumed in eternal fire.

WHERE IS THE SCENE OF THIS DEMONIAK WARFARE ? It is around *"the camp of the saints and the beloved city."* We must remember that John is not a political historian, but a seer depicting the strugglings of the kingdom of God on earth, through certain **"signs"** presented to his inner eye. Do not let the notion of a stone and lime Jerusalem lead you into a snare. John has shown us that historic Judaism is for ever gone [**This is not so ! Ed. PB Rom 11**]; its earthly site is even clean wiped out. He writes with another Jerusalem in his eye — one dearer than the old; the true home of God's saints; the real metropolis of his kingdom upon earth.

So soon as the field is clear he will tell us of this Jerusalem; but, meanwhile, principles must be postponed to persons if anything more interesting, and the work of the old world be completely done before we are fully introduced into the new. That this millennial forecast of John's is not beyond the truth, all history bears witness. The rapid spread of Christian truth over the Roman world, was succeeded by a dangerous relapse into heathen thought. The dark ages, as we call them, was an invasion of the Church by demoniac thought — a revival of sacerdotalism with its pretentious claim to rule the heavens, and its magical appeals to the superstitious fears of men.

Page 216 - Satan Loosed - The camp of the saints was compassed, the beloved city beleaguered by Satanic foes; and only the fresh fire of God's word — breathed from the nostrils of such heaven born souls as Luther —

Machtiger Eichbaum !

Deutschen Stammes ! Gottes Kraft !

— rolled back the tide of hell and saved the world.

Then it is possible that we are living in that millennial age about which men dream such Utopian dreams ! It is: we are. That conclusion may be a surprise to many of our readers. But let us not forget that once in the Church's history it was the common belief that John's 1000 years were gone. Dorner bears witness that the Church up to Constantine understood by **"Anti-christ"** chiefly the heathen state and to some extent unbelieving Judaism — (*System, etc.*, iv. 390). Victorinus, a bishop martyred in 303, reckoned the 1000 years from the birth of Christ.

Augustine wrote his *magnum opus*, **"the City of God,"** with a sort of dim perception of the identity of the Christian Church with the New Jerusalem. Indeed, we know that the 1000 years were held to be running by the generations previous to that date, and so intense was their faith that the universal Church was in a ferment of excitement about and shortly after A.

D. 1000, in expectation of the outbreak of Satanic influence. Wickliff, the reformer, believed that Satan had been unbound at the end of the 1000 years, and was intensely active in his day. That this period in Church history is past, or now runs its course, has been the belief of a roll of eminent men too long to be chronicled on our page — of Augustine, Luther, Bossuet, Cocccius, Grotius, Hammond, Hengstenberg, Keil, Moses Stuart, Phillippi, Maurice, etc., etc.

Page 217 - The Millennial Age - Let it be kept in mind that John is not responsible for the extravagancies so commonly associated with the millennial age. There is not a syllable here to justify them. And yet the millennium Christ has actually given us is better than the sensuous dreams with which men stupify themselves. Christianity has changed the world; made all things new. We are so accustomed to magnify the evil in the world that we forget to give God thanks for the evils which his Gospel has extirpated. Go back upon that old pagan world into which the Gospel came — take up such a book as Brace's *Gesta Christi*, the achievements of Christ, and read there how Christianity has changed the life and character of the whole civilised pagan world. One may well exclaim in the eloquent language of Farrar, —

"What need to tell you again how it purified a society which was rotten through and through with lust and hate, how it rescued the gladiator, how it emancipated the slave, how it elevated womanhood, how it flung over childhood the aegis of its protection, how it converted the wild, fierce tribes from the icy steppes and broad rivers of the North, how it built from the shattered fragments of the Roman Empire a new created world, how it saved learning, how it baptized and re-created art, how it inspired music, how it placed the poor and sick under the angel wings of mercy, and entrusted to the two great archangels of reason and conscience the guidance of the young !"

BUT WHAT OF THE "FIRST" RESURRECTION ?

This reign of the saints with Christ is the **first** resurrection; are there more to follow, and in what sense ? Another subject of bewildering perplexity alike to pro and post-millenarians, but which resolves itself into sunlight when we think in the track of John.

Page 218 - The First Resurrection - We have not space to refute the many surmises which are afloat; but hope to make John's meaning plain in a few sentences. Paul is our great authority on the resurrection of the dead. When does it take place ? *" They that are Christ's at his coming."* This agrees with John, who has just shown us the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven, and now shows us the *first* resurrection in these reigning saints. It is a simultaneous *"upstanding"* of all the dead in Christ; and is signalised as ***the first resurrection, not. by any means, as is***

commonly taught, to emphasise the idea that there is one or more similar resurrections still to follow at distant intervals; but to emphasise the apostolic doctrine that this is absolutely the first resurrection that has been achieved — that even the Old Testament saints had not attained their final destiny until that Christ whom the Jews despised and cursed, had by his merits prepared a place, for them in heaven, and led them into its final rest. This resurrection is that which is immediately anticipated in all the books of the New Testament. John here assures us that it has taken place. Every Christian soul at that moment in the intermediate state was called up into the Father's house — some one of the many mansions — for service in the kingdom of heaven.

This however, while it is the *first*, and perhaps the last of its kind, does not exclude resurrection in another manner. The Church exists on earth; men are born and die, long after the earliest saints have ascended up to heaven. This too, is clearly enough indicated in the Scripture.

Page 219 - Are there other Resurrections ? Paul's interest naturally does not reach far beyond the *first resurrection* of the *Parousia*. time; but he ventures a step or two. "*We shall not all sleep . . . at the last trump,*" that is, at the coming of Christ's kingdom. Of course, it follows that many of the Corinthians can not be in the *first* resurrection, which is only of *the dead or* those fallen asleep. Would not this be a grievous loss to these Corinthians ? Would it not consign them to the Hades state, a time of waiting in imperfect conditions of vitality and glory, until perhaps some other and distant coming of their Lord for their deliverance ? No, by no means. They, in the putting off of their corruption would not *descend* Hades — they would be *caught up* to meet the Lord; they would not be sentenced to a *long; delay* and eager waiting for their Lord, they would *be changed as it were in a moment* from the Church on earth to the glorified Church above. They will have no reason to regret that they are not dead before the coming of their Lord to take his saints to heaven, because Christ has henceforth abolished Hades for his people, and given them immediate victory over death's most sharp and bitter sting. Such is Paul's answer; given, alas, if we may judge by experience, too briefly and obscurely to be easily seized; but plain enough when the key is found. The *first* resurrection is that which takes place of all sleeping Christians simultaneously at the *Parousia*; afterwards resurrections are not general but particular — "*each man in his own order.*"

Page 220 - "Caught up together with them" - The place is ready for the Christian, if the Christian is ready for the place; hence death is immediate translation. The impression seems to be widely spread that Paul held that at the moment of the last trump those Christians living on the earth would

be caught up into the mass of the resurrected dead so as to be partakers in one common act of ascension. Perhaps this idea is borrowed from 1 Thess 4.15-17. It is, however, distinctly stated there that what befalls the living Christian is an *after* not a simultaneous experience (5.17); and though the words "*together with them,*" look to be equivalent, to "*simultaneously*" they are not actually so. "Ama (together) may express the idea of *place* as well as of *time*, and in the New Testament most frequently carries the idea of *identity* of *quality*, and might well be translated "*likewise.*" The word is radically identical with the **Sanskrit sama, Latin simul, Gothic sama, English, same**. In this light, it is seen that Paul instructs the Thessalonians only to this effect, that they, though not dead at the second coming, will afterwards be caught up in similar manner to the dead, to meet them and be for ever in their blessed society. Paul's teaching is thus in strictest harmony with the intimation of John: "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord henceforth,*" because they immediately enter on their rest and the reward of their works. After the simultaneous resurrection which John now witnesses, each Christian dying immediately passes into the society of his Lord. Hence, the doctrine of the Apostles is far more reasonable and more comforting than the usual interpretations make it. These point us to a distant day as the complete realization of our hopes. "*Like the martyrs in Rev 5.10, we are to be in eternity waiting eagerly for complete triumph.*" (Beet, *Symposium*, 153).

But the entire New Testament teaching is, that as soon as the Christian age is introduced, the Christian heavens are opened, and the Christ like worker meets with his reward.

Page 221 - "The. Rest of the Dead" - Immediate transition from one life to another, from the Church below to the Church above — such as will appear to consciousness as an instantaneous change — is the well warranted expectation of the ripened saint. Thus does Christ equalize, as near as possible, the portion of his saints.

WHAT BECOMES OF THE REST OF THE DEAD ? "*They lived not until the thousand years should be finished.*" John thus simply severs them from the peculiar rewards of faithful believers in Christ Jesus. In the spirit world at that moment were all the past generations of the earth. We need not be surprised that multitudes of them could have no share in the joys and triumphs of the Christian saints. Many of them had lived and died in sin; and been "*spirits in prison*" before the Saviour's advent. How could they who were ignorant or unbelieving *reign with Christ* — how even could they *live with Him* ? From the rewards of the Christian age they are excluded. They are "*not worthy of that aion (age), nor of 'upstanding' from among the dead*" (Luke 20.35); and hence, they "*go away into aionian separation.*" John's language does not imply that at the end of the 1000 years they are

exalted to the society of the faithful in Christ Jesus. Their future is somewhat strangely left indefinite. His eye sweeps along the Christian age, but not up to the very last does he see them enter into the communion of the saints. It is with them as with the foolish virgins. The sentence runs solemnly (as some might think, with no positive encouragement to expect a reversal of their doom; and as others might say, not to the exclusion of some distant hope):— ***“Ye cannot enter now.”***

Page 222 - The General Judgement - This, however, is not John's last word about ***“the rest of the dead.”*** Here they are only incidentally bounded off from the saints to give shadow to the picture. By and bye, he will tell us more, and when that moment comes perhaps this little ray of hope may be totally quenched.

THE GENERAL JUDGEMENT OF THE DEAD.

What then is the state, during these 1000 years, of those vast companies of the dead who have not entered into heaven with Christ ? This is a question raised by the usual interpretation of this passage — to which it gives no answer. We know nothing of these myriads of dead for a thousand years — a curious fact; and still more strange if we are to spread out this period into 365,000 years, after the usual fashion of the year-day theory. The Seer is not responsible for the awkwardness of this eschatology. The puzzle arises from a fatal misconception of John's meaning. This general judgement is supposed to take place *at the end of the 1000 years* — to be preceded by a destruction of earth and heaven — and to embrace Christians and non Christians, and the dead who have been in Hades or Gehenna during the 1000 years. A finer piece of confusion is inconceivable. It utterly dislocates John's thoughts, and introduces an eschatology which is incoherent, and without a particle of support in Scripture. Such, however, is the finding of such eminent commentators as Bleek, Weiss, Gebhardt, Dorner, Godet, Edwards, and, we suppose, all the ordinary premillennial adventists.

Page 223 - The Coming and the Judgement - Dorner frankly calls attention to the conflict which this interpretation raises with the other Scriptures, inasmuch as they join the judgement and the consummation of the world to Christ's second advent, while Revelation interposes a reign of Christ for a 1000 years before the end arrives (*System*, iv.389). The contradiction is seen by many, but has to be left unremedied. It has to be carefully noted that we must not read the successive paragraphs of this book as if given in strict chronological succession. Such an order is simply impossible in a series of visions covering a subject so many sided and profound. Will our readers be kind enough to extend to us their patience and attention, while we try to show them now that the reward of the saints just witnessed and the judgement scene before us are essentially one

transaction. John's glance forward a 1000 years is no part of his original purpose, but only an interjected note of needful warning which breaks the continuity of his leading course of thought. Again we say, what John does not see, but is only told and tells again to us, lies out of the direct line of his teaching, and is to be understood as parenthetical. We must, therefore, as the method of the book demands, take the vision of 5.11, and link it on to the vision of 5.4, because the right concatenation of John's thought lies along the line of what is made *visible* to the seer, and not along the explanatory by-paths into which he may digress. The saints upon their thrones are therefore closely linked to the judgement scene which follows.

That this is so, is plain from the corresponding moment in the first or night-half of the book (11.18), (p. 102-3) when, at the completion of judgement on the living Judaic world, the time of the dead to be judged and the Lord's servants to be rewarded is come.

Page 224 - Good and Bad judged together - Both events proceed together and are inseparably one. So, too, in the more constructive or day-side of the book, we must clasp in one the judgement of the living world in chap 18. with the reward of Christ's faithful ones and the condemnation of the wicked dead. In doing so, we fall into harmony with all the other Scripture teachings on the judgement. Everywhere the judgement is two fold — of the living and the dead; and everywhere it is at once of the evil and of the good. If, for instance, we take the classical passage in John's Gospel, its meaning seems so clear as to be unmistakable. *"The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live"* — cannot be explained away, as do Augustine and a multitude of successors, into conversion and its experimental life. The whole passage is of the nature of a climax, and already Christ has claimed the power to introduce men to the heavenly life. Nor could Christ feel any need to say: *"the hour cometh,"* if he only claimed the power to turn men from sin. He claims here nothing less than to be the Lord of the dead. He will especially possess that Lordship after his own resurrection; but even before that time, in special instances, the dead do hear and obey — these individual cases being signs of a universal sovereignty about to come. The altogether future command of the dead which Christ claims in 5.28-9 is his exercise of Lordship, in an hour then comparatively near, over *the final destinies of all the dead.* *"The hour cometh when all in the tombs shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done ill unto the resurrection of judgement."*

Page 225 - Harmony of Gospel and Apocalypse - There is by no means that difference which Westcott finds, — in the Apocalypse, *"an open*

judgement of men," and in the Gospel, *"a judgement which is spiritual and self executing."* This interpretation is a desperate effort to harmonise what otherwise seems confusion; but the judgements are the same in all respects. Christ is equally active in them both, and the harmony is complete. In both Gospel and Apocalypse, as indeed in all the Scriptures, there is to be an immediate judgement of the living and the dead — both saints and sinners. Nowhere in Christ's teaching is there a separation as to the time of judgement between saint and sinner, nor is such a separation in the book of Revelation. We have already seen, in the preceding chapter, the judgement of the living Heathen world, as before we had seen the Jewish, and it is now meet that we should see the Lord proceed with equal step to the judgement of the dead. The first part of that judgement scene is — the saints of Christ upon their thrones. But why is the saints reward thus severed from the general judgement of the dead ? It is only severed in appearance; *"the rest of the dead "* are in this very scene appointed their award—negatively, that is by exclusion from the honours of the saints. The saints are, however, of deliberate purpose made to stand out from the judgement of the wicked. John here follows a principle with which we are perfectly familiar. Before the unfolding of every scene of judgement or trial in this book, whatever is to be exempted from its severities is exhibited as divinely saved before the judgement comes.

Page 226 - Exemption from Judgement - Witness the sealing of the servants of God before the trumpet judgements; the measuring of the core of the temple before its outward destruction; the Witnesses before their death declared to be indestructible and immediately raised from the dead; the woman protected from the dragon, the 144,000 on Mount Zion from the ravages of the beast and the reaping of the land, the Church upon the glassy sea amid the seven vial plagues; the saints called out of Babylon before her destruction, the saints called to the marriage supper of the Lamb before his armies go forth to make war on the earth; and finally here, the departed saints upon their thrones before the opening of the judgement books.

Our readers will see that we are introducing no new principle of interpretation, but only observing the uniform habit of the book. Good news before bad; fears allayed before excited. *"God is ready to judge the dead"* but no fear for his saints. As Christ taught John, believers shall not enter into judgement. The saints come forth to a resurrection of life, and not like the wicked to a resurrection of judgement. They need no trial, no opening of the books of their inner life, for their record is too manifest, their character too well attested by their fidelity to the Lamb to need particular questioning. Yes, they come to a time of judgement; but are not judged so much as made the standard by which others shall be adjudged their

doom. *"The rest of the dead"* are not taken up to be for ever with the Lord. Their judgement proceeds to its issues, as we read. *John sees "a great white throne."* *Such was the splendour* of the vision, its vastness and solemnity, that nothing else was seen by John.

Page 227 - Earth and Heaven fled away - One can only smile when expositors gravely find here a *destruction* of heaven and earth. John merely tells us, in a touch of unparalleled sublimity, that from his sight the old familiar earth has disappeared; and even the accustomed heaven is gone. The Seer visually is he knows not where. His topography is at fault. He does not seem to be in heaven; nor yet in hell; nor certainly is he standing on the earth, for God is not visible in space and time. All he is sure of is that he stands before the splendid majesty of God, and that all the dead are there. We are left in doubt about the saints; but we take for granted that the saints are here, not among the crowd, but on their thrones. All Hades is gathered in its mighty mass. Whether men were buried in graves, burned on the funeral pyre, or tossed in the restless sea, all are here.

No form of bodily death can keep souls from the judgement bar of God. They are here in all their nationalities, in all their faiths, in all their varieties of character, — the men and the women, the kings and the beggars of that old pre-Christian age. They are to be assorted and put in order in the eternal world, so as to realize what their life on earth has been, and what is the essential outcome of the principles they have obeyed. There is no partiality in the judgement; no injustice, no difference of principle in fixing their rewards. *"Every man according to his works"*. The issues of this life, we see, are different degrees of happiness; different destinies, ranging between the two extremes of living and reigning with Christ in age long blessedness and going away into age long fire — the very fire which had scorched so many of them on earth to no apparent good result — with what fruits in the grand finality of God no man, but God only knows.

Page 228 - Death and Hades destroyed - And *Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire*. *"The last enemy is destroyed."* Death and Hades are overcome for the saints of God. The kingdom of Christ knows them no more. Christ has abolished Death; the Christian never dies. Hades cannot hold the child of God; may be is abolished for dread Gehenna to the sinner.

Blessed are the dead in Christ from henceforth.

Heaven is open to believers. We that live now immediately reap the fruits of Christ's mediation. We are already risen with Christ; and when death comes, we shall be changed directly from the Church below into the Church above — caught up to meet the Lord with all his saints.

THE NEW JERUSALEM

CHAPTER XXI.

"The name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there."

Page 228 - THIS entire drama of the Revelation is the official close of the Judaic age or dispensation, and the official installment of the Messianic or Gospel age. This transition point is much referred to by our Lord and his Apostles as *"the end of the age,"* and its work is described as a judgement in the visible and invisible which clears the field for the advent of a dispensation of more light and power. Always that is described as *"near,"* and it was near in the most honest and human sense that words can bear.

We have seen how cordially Revelation is in harmony with Gospels and Epistles on the subject of *"last things."* We have learned here how the Lord comes in his kingdom, warring with all the obstacles to its triumph, judging the earth and consuming its evil with unquenchable fire; and now, along with this the spirit-world, or Hades, is judged of its dead — the saints raised up into their heavenly state, and the other dead awarded to a condition suitable to their works. There are now only **TWO** things lacking.

(1) We have seen the old dispensation in its typical form — Jerusalem, with its temple and altar; but we have had only the meagrest description of the new dispensation.

Page 230 - The New Jerusalem - It has not yet taken shape beyond the intimation that it is the age of the Gospel for all nations, and tongues, and peoples. The book cannot be complete until it has set some definite form before its reader's mind, revealing what shall take the place of the old that has vanished away. Our eyes must see Jerusalem's substitute.

(2) When John ventured for a moment forward into the history of the new dispensation, he spoke of *"a camp of the saints, the beloved city,"* as beleaguered by the demoniac host; stirred from the abyss. Then we knew nothing of this beloved city; and in the keenness of our interest eager questionings arose — What is it, where is it, what does the Seer refer ? Patience — the old work must be judged and put away before the new work can be seen; and as soon as John's pen is free he will make it plain.

The remainder of the book exactly answers to our wants. John sees a *new Heaven and new Earth*, which the sea does not count, because he sees by *"light that never was on sea or shore."* Prosaic commentators tell us that after the thousand years there is a great conflagration, by which the structure of the globe is changed, and something organically different created in its place. The supposition is not plausible it is totally incredible,

when we see the ground on which it rests. Peter's prophecy (2 Pet 3.1-8) is made largely responsible for this doctrine. But why is the Apostle not interpreted by the meaning such language in the prophetic books ? Why is he not believed when he says that his generation looking for these things, and earnestly desiring them and that this judgement is about to begin ? Why his analogy of the destruction of the flood not kept, and the revolution limited to the people and the civilization of the time ?

Page 231 - A Re-constituted World - If Peter was mistaken as to *the date* of this destruction, was he not still more probably mistaken as to its nature? And why, again, is it not observed that before the thousand years begin, and throughout the larger portion of this book, the earth is swept by fire, scorching and burning men, the heavenly bodies shaken, and the fundamental elements of that old civilization consumed ? It says little for the visual organs of expositors that, when they have been witnessing this burning earth, they come to the closing scene so oblivious of what has taken place that they are not aware that this burning has as yet begun.

Of course, John expects that we know that Peter's burning is overpast. We are now temporarily in the beginning of the Christian age or dispensation. The old elementary world has perished in a baptism of fire. *"All old things are passed away; behold, God has made all things new,"* although it is only as yet in germ, according to God's method of creation. Oh, if only we lived for a decade under those old heathen heavens of Persia, Greece, or Rome, peopled with their wicked, quarrelsome, licentious deities, until we felt the curse of them aright; and were then brought from under their gloomy terrors into the bright and happy sky of Christian faith, we would know whether or not a new heaven has been created. Does the reader who wants something more spectacular and stunning for his new earth know what sort of earth was that old Roman world in which the Apostles shed their blood ?

Page 232 - A Re-constituted World - Conceive of an empire in which there were 60,000,00 Slaves ! — where infanticide was practised even by wealthy families — where empresses were strumpets — wives were husbands' chattels to be lent to other men — where human sacrifices were offered to the gods — where emperors were deified — where suicide was counted virtuous — where fornication and adultery were religious rites — where sexual acts were openly performed upon the stage — where men were kept to fight with swords, and prisoners thrown to lions for public sport — where the poor man had no rights nor charities — where almost all the rich were dissolute and princes almost all oppressive — we say, Look upon that world, and then —

"How soon a smile of God. can change the world !"

look at the world which Christianity has created, and, with all its shortcomings acknowledged, tell us if, thank God, we are not living in a new earth to-day. [**New Earth—New World ? PB Ed.**]

This new world is initiated by *a city which John sees come down out of heaven from God*. This city is depicted with a brilliancy of setting which we dare not touch. It is all glorious without and within. We, gaze and admire, but shall not stain it with the dull and muddy pigments in which alone we could possibly limn its features. If tempted to delineate the subject, it could only be in the hope that our description would somewhat veil its dazzling glory and let weak eyes look it fuller in the face. Two mistaken interpretations of this city are afloat. One makes it an actual city of the newly created and sublimated earth. We have already disposed of this imagination. The other view is, that it is the home of the glorified in heaven.

Page 233 - What is the New Jerusalem ? - We are surprised that such an interpretation should find acceptance. Andrew Fuller says, with his usual sanctified good sense, — *"It seems singular that the heavenly state should be introduced as a subject of prophecy... The whole of what is said, instead of describing the heaven of heavens, represents the glory of that state as coming down upon the earth !"* And yet this vision does not, as he supposes, attribute a glorious condition to the earth.

This glory is not universally diffused; but limited to the area of the city, found only within its walls. Surely, there need be no misapprehension. It is the city of Ezekiel; the ideal Jerusalem in which God dwells with men; and that can be only the Christian Church. Indeed, John tells us it is only such a city as is equivalent to God's coming down to dwell with men, to be their God, and to make his peace and righteousness possess the hearts of men on earth. Such a city is not visible and tangible as other cities are. It is planted on that mountain of the Lord which no earthquake can tear up. It is seated high above the dank and fetid vapours of this earth; in those superior realms where float the heavenly atmospheres of humility and love in which the angels breathe.

Its dimensions declare it to be superhuman — 1200 miles square and 1200 miles in height, a perfect cube like the holy place: that part of the ancient temple measured, because in the end of John's book as in Ezekiel's it was to be restored as the New Jerusalem. Well has the author of *Ecce Homo* said something like this: No man built this city, no architect designed it, no eye ever saw its walls rising tier on tier, no ear ever heard the click of trowel or hammer on its stones, for it is a city built and planned of God and let down out of heaven to be the metropolis of God's earthly kingdom, the seat of his throne.

Page 234 - The Old and New Jerusalem - What then is this city ? Augustine has made a noble attempt to answer — and would, but for a too prosaic literalism, have seized the truth. It is the Christian dispensation; Christianity in its truths, its affections, and its potencies: the seat and organism of God's presence among men. If we describe it by what it is to God, it is his temple and throne; or by what it is to men, it is their light, life, and salvation.

As this city is the *new* Jerusalem, it is plainly pointed out as the successor of the *old* — a spiritualisation of that *New Jerusalem* which Ezekiel describes as to succeed the Jerusalem of his day. It will be found to fulfil corresponding functions, in a degree as much superior as Christ is superior to Moses, the Son to the servant of God; or as the holiest of all was superior to the outer courts in the elementary age of divine revelation.

1. It was in Judaism that God dwelt and communicated of his truth and love to men in the last age of the world; and it is in the Church that God now dwells on earth and communicates Himself to men. That Church is spoken of as Jerusalem, in other portions of the Scriptures; and no better commentary than those texts can be written on the New Jerusalem of John. The Christian Church, in its truths and inspirations, brings together into one assembly of saints and worshippers, the angels, the spirits of the dead, the glorified apostles, and the saints on earth. Christianity unites two worlds, makes one Church, joins the visible and invisible into one.

Page 235 - Defences of the Church - Heaven comes down to earth; God is joined to man. This city was to the writer to the Hebrews an existing reality. "*Ye are come to the heavenly Jerusalem.*" It is not a distant terminus — a thing of hope — a glory the Church may see after a thousand years are gone. Ye have received it now, and are come into its blessed light, its happy privileges, its saintly, angelic, and divine communion. Judaism itself was a revelation and a gift from God to men, that God might dwell among them; but it was so only in a distant or elementary way.

That dispensation was ordained "*in the hands of angels*"; now God immediately dwells with men in Christ. Christian truths and principles are no elaborations of human genius—no clumsy invention of needy priests or crafty statesmen — no simple out cropping of the superstitious leanings of the human heart. Its foundations are still seen dipping down beneath the strata of naturalism into a region whither the eagle's eye cannot follow. Her strong defences are her own divinity.

Not by the arguments of her profoundest theologians, nor by her array of ecclesiastical laws and councils — not by her political ascendancy where she has overridden the State, nor by her political subserviency where she

has been its tool has she withstood the assaults and batterings of her foes, and gone from one degree of glory to another, in pursuance of the divine ideal which she follows and is destined to embody on the earth. These have been as much her hindrance as her protection.

She has survived as she has lived, because she is a city of eternal truth and righteousness, whose soul is God Himself, imparting to her outermost circumference his own eternity, breathing into her that love whose magic fire encompasses and thrills her, while it blasts the earthly principles and potencies that in hatred other light, come up to assail her bulwarks.

Page 236 - Light and Life - 2. This city is *a source, of light and life to the nations of the earth.* *"It has no need of the sun nor of the moon."* Clearly, that is no city of this world. *"There is no night there."* That is no city subject to the revolutions of this globe. *"The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light of it."* This is *"the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world"* — *"the light of life"* — *"the true light that now shineth"* — and what is this but the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and where does it shine but in the Church of God ? Then we read that *"the nations shall walk in the light of it."* Notably, it is not said that the nations *dwell within the New Jerusalem* or Church on earth. The nation as such is not pure enough to come into a city where every inhabitant is searched and sifted to the core.

Every so called Christian nation which has yet existed has been to some extent a harbour of corruption, of kingcraft, and of priest craft, rent by feuds of blood and class, and stained by sins which would defile foulness itself. One by one we go into the city of our God. One by one we bring our tribute of submission to the feet of Christ, one by one we wash our hearts and garments, one by one we bring our genius, our talents, or common place abilities, and yield them up to the service of the Master.

The nations as such will recognise the city of God; they will receive so much of its light, and shape their legislation somewhat by its principles. The Gospel will become the bright illuminating sun of social life and conduct; and in proportion as the nations walk in its light will they be blessed; or as they resist its teaching, dwindle in influence, hasten to corruption, and perish from the earth.

Page 237 - No Night in Christ - That sublime saying, *"here shall be no night there,"* may seem too much of heaven to be applicable to any state on earth. We must not forget, however, that it is an Old Testament anticipation of Israel's glory upon the earth; and a distinctive feature of the Gospel dispensation. *"Ye are all sons of light and of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkness."* Is not that the case ? Do we not actually experience the truthfulness of Christ's saying — *"He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness; but have the light of life."*

What is the character of this light ? It is that glory of God which we are told **"shines in the face of Jesus Christ."** If we know Christ, we have been **"called out of darkness into this marvellous light."**

If we say, the light which is in Christ is not equal to this, we condemn ourselves. If we dwell in the riches of God's grace, then all mystery is made plain to us, and there is **"no night "**with us. Even death will not dim the splendours of the Christian's day.

At eventide it shall be light. The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day. As the higher up we climb, the sun grows brighter, so the nearer we draw to Christ and God the brighter becomes the light until upon our eyes it breaks in spirit worlds as from the naked face of God.

3. *There is no temple.* *there* because the city is all temple: the perfect cube of " the holiest of all." All in that city are priests to God, with access to the heart and ear of God.

Page 238 - No Ritual - Life is continuous worship; work is sacrifice; and prayer the offering of sweet incense unto God. That horrid notion, revived by pre-millennial theorists, and diligently taught to-day, that again the Christian is to cut the throats of beasts and offer bloody sacrifices in a material New Jerusalem, is utterly discountenanced by the Scriptures.

It is a surviving remnant of the pagan nature and the elementary ritual which Christ came expressly to sweep away. Its resurrection in these days is a disgrace to 19th century Christianity; and is to be accounted for surely, not merely by mistaken exegesis, but by that superstitious revival of ritualistic flummery which has invaded the Episcopal Church of England — only we trust as a fitful and passing aberration.

4. Here is *continuous peace and consolation.* **"God shall wipe away all tears."** Augustine says that it seems **"excessively barefaced "**to refer such words to the present time. We are bold enough to do it. Strictly speaking, they do not depict a state where there is absolutely no experience of affliction. Rather do they impress us that *there are tears to wipe away*; but that there is no sorrow in Christ Jesus, and, in the blessed hopes and consolations of the Gospel, a remedy for every pain and sorrow of the heart.

There always will be tears to wipe away so long as babes are born and men are grown from infancy; but the pains and achings of the soul's relations to the eternal world are entirely overcome in Jesus Christ. Go back to your Old Testament saints, and mark how doleful were their experiences. **" The pains of hell got hold on me " — " tears and sorrow were my meat."**

Page 239 - Joy in Christ - See what perplexities beset them about *"the ways of God to man"* — what fears of death encompassed them ! Look out upon that old heathen world ! How sad it was although it had inherited the fairest portion of God's earth ! How comfortless the religion even of its truest seekers after God ! How gruesome with its pictures of quarreling and avenging gods ! How repulsive its thin and hungry life beyond the grave ! How utterly changed is the aspect of the world to the man who writes — *"the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost."*

Turn to that man's epistles — follow him through the manifold trials of his life and you find his pains and troubles so lifted up into the marvelous light of God's eternal love that they are transmuted into joys; and instead of weeping, he is rejoicing in his tribulation. In Christ's salvation there is not only nothing to pain and disappoint; but everything to make pain and disappointment in the world entirely change their character.

If our experience has fallen short of this, we must not make it the measure of what the city of God may be to other men. John must describe it according to its ideal powers, its highest capabilities of endowment, and what it shall be in eternity more truly than in time. The city of God is heaven itself as well as heaven on earth.

5. *Continuous safety and blessedness.* **"No more curse."** The former earth was cursed by sin and brought forth its thorns and thistles; but in the kingdom of God, *"every plant that our heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."* There will be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mount. It is a land of fruitfulness.

Page 240 - No Death in Christ - *"Wherever the waters rolled there was life,"* and now the wilderness is blooming like a rose, and the Christian is like a tree planted by the rivers. It is a state of perfect righteousness. *"He that is born of God cannot sin."*

"There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus," for they are *"made free from the law of sin and death."* Walking in love and pleasing God, their experience is *"peace that passeth knowledge."*

6. There is **continuous life**. It is startling to read — *"Death shall be no more."* So much is death with us that we are constrained to relegate these words to some entirely different state of life than this. However, they are intended to be true today. What says the Apostle ? *"Christ has abolished death."* *"He hath destroyed him that had the power of death."*

What says Christ of Himself ? *"He that believeth on me shall never die."* *"He that keepeth my words shall not see death."* *"He that believeth on me is passed from death unto life."* Every Christian then should be *"delivered from the fear of death."*

Its character is essentially changed by faith in Christ; it is not the ancient death, but ascension into fuller life. Death and Hades are indeed cast into the lake of fire; there is no death beyond bodily transformation to the child of God, no dolefulness beyond **"the shadow feared of man."**

7. *Continuous royalty.* **" They shall reign for ever and ever."** The Church is destined to be triumphant. Satanic outbreaks, John has warned us, will occur in the course of history; but so far from destroying the city of God, they will only serve to remind the saints that there are still portions of the earth to conquer, and remnants of hereditary evil to be warred against and overcome.

Page 241 - A Missionary Centre - " Behold, I make all things new." This regeneration is accomplished through the Church. New herself in all the principles and conditions of her life, it is God's purpose to reign in her and by her transform the earth. The kingdom of God on earth is one continuous evolution from the vital centre of the Church. All evolution implies involution. Because God is in Christ, and Christ is in the heart of the Church, the Church is the leaven that shall work in the meal of universal humanity until the whole is leavened.

The earth shall slowly through the ages grow liker heaven, as the Church continues to utter the prayer **" thy kingdom come,"** and to obey the divine command, **" Go ye into all the world."** The saints are to reign by putting down everything opposed to righteousness within the nations of which they are citizens, and by going forth to conquer the peoples that still trust to other gods in ignorance of the Gospel of Christ.

8. The identity of the New Jerusalem with the Gospel dispensation is proven by the emphatic manner in which it is charged with the work of evangelising the world into which it has come. It is a holy city, essentially incapable of defilement by the world's unbelief and sin; but it is not on that account a city in the clouds or in the eternal state, far separate from the wicked world ; nor is it simply a state of reward and blessedness for the saved. In this city is **" the tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations"** It has been sent down from heaven upon this gracious evangelical mission quite as much as to impart **"the fruits of life "** to the saints of God.

Page 242 - Evangelizing Work - " The river of the water of life " is the Gospel fountain of salvation for him that is athirst: and whosoever thirsts is invited to come with freedom and partake. That this is a notification for the beginning of the evangelization of the world is beyond all question. The Christian does not thirst, for he to whom Christ gives the water of life **"shall never thirst again,"** but become himself a well of water unto other thirsty souls.

Therefore, such an intimation, standing as a divine preface to the figure of the New Jerusalem (21.6), stamps it as the Gospel dispensation whose mission it is to carry the water of life to the ends of the earth.

One condition of this evangelizing work is the contiguity of saint and sinner. Nearness is an essential requisite to power. God is able to save in Christ, because, standing there, his hand is on humanity, his feet upon the earth. The saint in the cloister or the hermitage is a dead branch of the Church. Without the city walls are dogs, sorcerers, murderers, idolaters, and all who make and love a lie (22.15); and it will be the mission of the saint to change these men until they become capable of a totally different classification, and are numbered with the saints. While the New Jerusalem exists, it is still the day of grace; the sinner can wash his robes and enter in at the gates of the city of God.

Not otherwise can he enter into the joys of God. Unclean and false, he cannot go in even at the open gate which so cordially bids him welcome because to enter is to become clean and true. How beautifully is there symbolised here the wideness, the freeness, the impartiality of the saving grace of God.

Page 243 - Universal Welcome - GATES OPEN — OPEN DAY AND NIGHT — GATES TO THE EAST AND WEST, THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH — GATES EVERYWHERE OF ADMISSION; and all the condition required is — *Wash your robes and enter in.*

That this city is no emblem of a merely future or distant state is most emphatically put before the readers of this book. John is told that this new city of God is an already accomplished fact. He had not seen it in this light before, nor could the world see it until the things which hid God's grace from men had been removed out of the way; but the Seer is informed by God Himself: "THESE WORDS ARE COME TO PASS." (21.6).

The New Messianic Age IS COME to the world, the City of God IS HERE, the water of life is flowing to all mankind, eternal joys await the saints that overcome. The cowardly who deny Christ's name in the trials of this hour, the unbelievers, the sorcerers, the idolaters who war against the Church,— these will have their portion, wherever they may be, in time or in eternity, in unending restlessness and misery.

RESUME AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER XXII.

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

Page 244 - A MODERN reader of Revelation opens it with the impression that the book is a mystery, and that it is hopeless to understand its lessons. If he reads it with the help of commentaries of the usual kind his perplexity will be intensified, and the more of them he consults the more will his bewilderment be increased. He finds that the 1800 years during which the book ought to have been growing plainer to the Church, still leave it wrapped in deepest mystery. Suppose, now, that he reads the book- with no pre-conceptions, no sooner does he dip into its pages than he finds that the primitive reader, even the casual *hearer* in the Sabbath gathering of the Church, is expected to understand and find practical guidance for his daily life.

Since, however, the learned commentator of today betrays on every page the signs of uncertainty and perplexity (after three fourths of the book is said to be fulfilled), how was it possible for the primitive Christian to understand and practise if to him the book's contents lay totally in the future ? Is it not clear that the early reader must have had a key to the book which the scholar of today has lost ? and is it not also evident that if the book speaks truly when it professes to deal with "*things which must shortly come to pass,*" it would necessarily be intelligible to the first generation as it cannot be to readers who will not use that key, or who take and shape it in the fire of their *a-priori* prophetic theories into a form that will not fit the lock ?

Page 245 - The World in John's Day - Let us go back and take a hasty glance at what we have found, and we shall see again how simple was the structure of the book as read in Apostolic times. John wrote to the early churches of "*a time of trial about to come to try them that dwell on the earth,*" a time as fierce and searching as a judgement day. That same season had been prophesied by the Baptist for the Jewish nation; by Christ and his Apostles for all the habitable world. We know from history how true were those prophecies.

It was a period of climacteric. Old systems of thought and civilization were ripening for decay; new ideas were in the air. The political world was unstable, the social world corrupt, the religious world demonised; and everything gathering itself up for that geological upheaval which came and made that time the watershed of two ages. Amid the ferment of the times the Church was suffering. Heresies were abroad; schism not uncommon. Jewish patriotism was making men sorry they had become Christians.

Many believers were "**drawing back unto perdition**," not prepared for the struggle of the new life with the old.

This book is sent for the encouragement of the Church. It reveals Christ afresh as no mere human teacher whose influence might go under in the confusion of the times; but as indeed Divine, clothed with power and glory, and guiding the march of history. John foretells what Christ shall bring to pass: what they themselves shall see. Judaism will be overthrown; the Church of Christ will be God's temple without the shell of ancient ritual.

Page 246 - The Message of John's Book - That would be the sign of the Son of Man: the visible signal of his truth and power; and the certain fulfillment of all his promises. The fact that He judges the visible dispensation is the proof that He judges the invisible; and that his saints and martyrs have been caught up into the place which He prepares for them in his Father's house, to reign with Him for ever in his kingdom.

As surely as this first foe or rival of the Church is overthrown, will that other foe through which the Devil is deceiving men — the harlot system of polytheistic confusion, heathen sacerdotalism — be also in due time overthrown. A Gospel age will be instituted, in which the Word of God will conquer every diabolical foe, and go forth possessing men and nations until the world is redeemed to God.

This new age necessarily implies transcendent changes. A new heaven is a new God for the nations, a new destiny for men, new worship in men's heart; and a new earth implies new experiences in religion, new social states, new springs of life, a happier world. Within this better world, as the secret of its bitterness, will be the spiritual Church of God, — the promised Zion or Jerusalem, the true city of our God. It is to be a dispenser of life and healing to the nations. They walk in its light. Happy are the individuals who have washed their robes, and entered into this heavenly citizenship. This Zion shall no more be moved, God is in the midst of her; and where God is there is no more death, and no more curse. No, there is no longer even any night, for the sun of God's favour never sets. His light never fades.

Page 247 - "Faithful and True." - These are present day experiences; true now, true everywhere, true eternally to all who are in Christ Jesus. It does not follow that we can exhaust them here. By and bye, we shall have a more abundant entrance into the everlasting city of our God. The New Jerusalem exhibits the ideal Christian experience that God will be perfecting in us to all eternity. Christ will be more to us in heaven; but in the New Jerusalem here He is essentially the same as He will be in heaven. Take that outline as the meaning of this delightful and magnificent book, and its mystery will flee away.

You will understand how the early reader was blessed in proportion as he received its meaning. You will find its symbols wonderfully clear, and every utterance as straightforward and as honest as the "**Amen**" of God.

Is it possible that, as we close our studies, we are flatly to contradict these solemn words of the angel that spoke for Christ: "**These words are faithful and true**" Have they indeed been such plain and whole some words that simple men can trust them to mean what they say ? Have they, indeed, been "**about things which must shortly come to pass ?**"

If they have mainly been about things removed a 1000 or 2000 years from those whom Christ addressed through John, how are these words true? Remember, the book started with this intimation; repeated it again and yet again. First, John told us so; next, Christ himself; and finally, the Angel of the Lord. Three witnesses. Do we indeed believe ? "**Behold, I come quickly**" If that was true at the beginning of the book, and true at the close, then the time that intervenes between the first act and the last is short indeed.

Page 248 - The Duration of the Drama Short - As a matter of fact, the book is constructed to cover the shortest time. The hour of judgement was *about* to *come* upon the Asiatic Churches, With the earliest scenes, the judgement thunderbolts are falling, the saints are scaled; in the midst of judgement the martyrs cry for haste and are told to wait a little time; and the first half of the book- closes with the assurance that the martyrs ARE avenged. **Not a syllable as to duration through all the visions longer than three-and-a-half years, or 1260 days, and the Lord is come.**

Take the second or positive aspect of Christ's Coming. After Christ ascends to heaven, Satan is cast down. He is in great wrath, because **HIS TIME IS SHORT**. In chap 19., Christ comes with his angels, wars with the beast and casts him into the lake of fire, while an angel binds Satan and casts him into the abyss. This event is the initiation of Christ's kingdom, or the official installment of the Gospel dispensation. Christ is come in his kingdom; thus again, we see that the time between Christ's ascent and his return is described as **short**.

That advent is emphatically premillennial. The forward reference to the close of a 1000 years is only a passing glance, a momentary note of warning to the infant Church not to expect too much in the earlier centuries of its history. All the *visions* of the book are realised before the millennial reign begins; the New Jerusalem being the reigning Church, "**the camp of the saints, the beloved city,**" the new divine centre of the ransomed earth. Thus does this portion of John's book clearly and persistently insist on a brief space of time as enclosing all the period between John's day and the institution of the kingdom of our Lord.

Page 249 - At Hand to the Apostolic Church - It was, therefore, true that our Lord came *quickly* according to his promise; and the only coming to which the Christian can now look forward, beyond the increasing presence of Christ's spirit in his heart, is that in which he shall be caught up into a higher world to meet his Lord.

"Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." How was that possible to those early readers for whom scarcely a seal was opened or one of the trumpets sounded ? This appeal is made meaningless unless all the prophecy is *one event*, realising itself at one time, as the book itself says. The Preterist is equally interested with the first generation in its meaning; and equally called upon to believe and obey, because it speaks to him of great divine transactions that bear upon his duty and his destiny. No others can keep this prophecy.

"Seal not up the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand" The same urgency is here as we have found elsewhere. Daniel's prophecy reaches forward at the utmost only to the abolition of *"the power of the holy people"*; that is 500 years from Daniel's time. Yet his prophecy was *to be sealed* because the time was distant. John is *not to seal for the time is at hand*. In the face of such a fact, students of prophecy will put John's fulfillment 2000 years away ! Does not the comparison show that John's events must fall out much within 500 years? Yes, and a great deal less.

For hear again:— *"Let the righteous do righteousness still; let the filthy be filthy still; and let the holy be holy still."* These words were never intended to prove that there can no change of character in eternity.

Page 250 - Book to be Obeyed - They simply express the suddenness of Christ's outburst upon that generation. *"Go on, thou hardened sinner, asking 'Where is the sign of his coming ?' You will not have time to repent before your wickedness overwhelms you ! Be steadfast in your faith, O Christian, your eye will soon behold the vindication of your righteousness the judge is at the door !"* Verses 18 and 19 are particularly convincing proofs that John's generation were to experience the contents of this book. This prophecy is — the Coming of Christ in Judgement.

It was to be read in the churches that day; and the penalty of perverse or unfaithful hearing was to be *exposure* to these judgements as they transpired from day to day. What more convincing proofs could the book contain that its confer especially concerned the people of its author's time As if, with a solemn oath, to put it beyond all dispute Christ avers **"YEA, I COME QUICKLY;"** and as a token of the ripeness of the times, and the true understanding of the Apostolic Church the answer is sent back:

"AMEN, COME LORD JESUS !"

We have all along kept in mind that this treat will fall into the hands of many whose interest in true interpretation of New Testament prophecy, largely subordinated to their desire to know what can yield them in the way of guidance and encouragement in their Christian life. For such we reserve our closing words.

Page 251 - Goal of Prophecy - This New Jerusalem would seem to be God's final revelation for the salvation of the world. The Gospel is the goal of all holy prophecy. The Scriptures from the beginning point to Christ, — beyond Christ, they are as silent as the grave. We are perfected in Christ Jesus for ever. The Gospel is God's final remedy for man's sin; the power of God unto salvation.

The Church is to grow fuller of the life of God; the belt of darkness round the Church grow thinner till it vanishes clean away. This can be accomplished only by each citizen of the New Jerusalem doing his duty towards the bettering of the world. Every man of God should be a warrior against ignorance and *evil* in all its forms, fired by the passionate impulse of the sculptor-poet —

*" Bring me my bow of burning Gold :
Bring me my arrows of desire;
Bring me my spear; O clouds unfold,
Bring me my chariot of fire,
I will not cease from mental fight
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land."*

Events of history in which evil is overthrown and truth advanced should be hailed by us as signs of the power and glory of our exalted Saviour. Since the early Church was taught to see the hand of Christ in that rapid evolution of events which issued in the fall of Judaism, and the growing impotence of heathen faiths, we also ought to see the interposition of the Master in every victory of the right. At some points history is the apotheosis of the wrong. Since Christ reigns, evil triumphs that it may the sooner come to ruin; and there are times when eyes almost blind might see the hand of Christ in history.

Page 252 - Hero Worship - Families, churches, factions, and nations are seen swinging in the scales of judgement, awaiting award or punishment; and though for a time the test seems meaning less and likely to end in confusion worse confounded, at length the majesty of right is vindicated. There is a Providence that makes for righteousness, and clears the character of the God who rules the world.

Whatever be the part that any creature plays in the march of progress the glory belongs to God alone. How prone human nature is to make heroes, demigods, or gods of its more assertive men ! The adulation, toadying, barefaced fulsome flattery that are poured upon leaders of religious movements in particular is often painful to behold by those who have any respect for human nature. That we are not beyond the temptation of worshipping the creature is particularly visible in the way saints are honoured with festivals, and evoked in prayers as if keepers of heaven's kingdom.

Even your sturdy Protestant shows this weakness in his unwholesome reverence of his favourite religious leaders. The smaller the sect, the more virulent the disease, even until it becomes a sin for other men to differ in opinion. The following generations are expected meekly to chain themselves around the great man's pedestal. Would that we studied more this weakness in the character of John as twice he threw his manhood at the angel's feet ! Would that religious leaders were as humble in their claims as this other world servant of the Lord. "*See thou do it not*"

Here is a thorough abnegation of all authority over men on the part of the angelic world. Here is an ascription of all honour and glory to God, and a touching manifestation of humility and immeritoriousness on the part of the heavenly vehicle of the truth, which ought to put to shame many of its earthly mouth pieces.

Page 253 - The Church and her Lord - What a rebuke to Popes, and lesser holy fathers, sitting on their thrones and holding out their toes and finger-rings for brethren in the Lord to kiss! and how mean and petty does such prostration make those who are content so to be humbled and made nothing of before weak men, too often swallowed up in the infernal lusts of dominion and pride. "*See thou do it not,*" in any form. Worship no pope, no priest, no minister.

Sit *under no man for his gifts*. Love the Church of God, and love its principles; and stand by them amid fortune and misfortune. Keep in mind that to be attracted by men and by their gifts, as distinguished from the principles they represent, is to be drawn fatally near the disposition which was condemned in John. "*See thou do it not.*"

The Church as the bride will always be looking and longing for her Lord and husband. This figure gives expression to a truth of prime importance, viz., that every true believer in the Lord is being inwardly united to Christ by ties that never will be broken — that mind and heart and soul are in some deep way being filled and possessed by Christ, so as to lift us up into his fellowship and closer conformity to his immortality and glory.

The cry, *"Come, Lord Jesus !"* is the Church's desire to know ever more of Christ, and see ever more of Him prevailing in the world over the errors and unrighteousness of men. It is by Christ's interior coming that we grow wise and good, beautiful and loving, and meet for God's presence in the heavens; and it is only as Christ finds fuller embodiment in his Church that the world will feel his influence and power, and grow a fairer and brighter world for sin-stricken and heavy-laden men.

Page 254 - The Church and the World - Great things are yet in store for the human race. The half has not yet been told us of what Christ will accomplish in the world. Even the most glowing prophetic anticipations of the Word will be fully realised, though not with the materialistic limitations in which they were given.

When we look at the capabilities of Christ's loving spirit, and think of it as embodied in a great and glorious Church in the continents and islands of a coming age, we have an assurance of great changes and reforms overall humanity in which every grade of men will have its share of blessing. *Even so, Lord Jesus. May the fullness of thy kingdom come. Though we shall not behold it with our eyes of flesh; may we, from the upper realms where Thou already reignest gloriously, look down upon this better earth and have the joy of thinking that we have individually helped to bring about the happier day. Such being the purpose of Heaven,*

The City of God should always have a pressing welcome for the sinner. Her voice must ever ring out clearly through the ages — *"He that is athirst let him come; let him take of the water of life freely."* Come now to be forgiven. Come to begin your life anew under the inspiration of love to Him who loved you and died for you; and all that is feeble and sinful in your life will break up and float away. In clean and holy garments you will stand within the City of God, walk in its light, taste its fruit, and see your God in the light that knows no setting while eternity endures,

THE GOSPEL AND EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN

Page 255 - WE have taken our readers carefully through the *locus classicus* of New Testament prophecy. Our most adverse critic will surely confess that we have been consistent in our principle of interpretation; that our method has been at least fairly reasonable, considering the changeable nature of the book's contents; that no difficulty has been purposely evaded; and that, on the lines laid down, the Apocalypse makes one compact and harmonious whole, according to the professed intention of its writer — *"a revelation of Jesus Christ in things about to come to pass."*

Now we shall proceed to judge the interpretation given by the most exacting of all tests — comparison with the prophetic teaching of the other New Testament Scriptures. This is a touchstone before which no other theory can stand.

The idealistic theory lately so strenuously advocated throws the Apocalypse out of gear with every other bit of Christian prophecy; While the current historical methods not only deal arbitrarily with many portions, but after all contradict the express purpose of the author, and, as their advocates frequently confess, raise many discrepancies with the other prophetic writings which no ingenuity can reconcile.

We claim that we shall be able to show the strictest agreement between all the Scriptures — one prophetic mind existing in the Apostolic Church, without repentance or even trace of so-called "development" in the authors whose writings cover the largest period of time.

Page 256 - The Gospel of St. John - Let us begin our studies with the other writings of St. John. And to make sure work let us recall the salient features of the teaching of the Apocalypse. It has told us that the second coming of Christ is to be *soon* after the book is written.

This coming has a two fold sphere of manifestation. In this world, it is the abrogation of a then existing dispensation in the fires of judgement, openly signalled in the destruction of Jerusalem; and it is the co-incident institution of an age of universal grace in which God in Christ goes forth to war with every evil, and the first fruits of whose ultimate victory is the shattering of the power of a then triumphant heathenism, the mistress of the world.

In the eternal world, it is Christ's descent to meet the dead, in order to judge the wicked and to raise up His saints into the glory which He had with the Father, where they are henceforth to *"live and reign."* In this new dispensation there is no material sacred city, no temple made with hands.

It is itself the New Jerusalem, spiritual and invisible, present potently wherever are Christ and His truth, universal and perpetual for His people. In this gracious dispensation death is no longer a misfortune. The Sheol - Hades state of waiting and looking for the Saviour is abolished, and the dead who die in the Lord reap at once the fruits of faith by entering upon heavenly glory.

Page 257 - Written after the Apocalypse - To sum the whole into a sentence — with the fall of Jerusalem, the then existing age was ended, the dead were judged, the saints were raised to heaven, and a new dispensation of a world wide order instituted, of which Christ is everlasting King, and ever present with His people, whether living here or dead beyond.

We take now into our hands the Gospel of St. John. This work is so unlike the Apocalypse both in matter, style, and language, that many scholars hesitate to admit that they are from one pen. The difference in language arises chiefly, we believe, from the fact that he wrote the Apocalypse early in life while as yet his acquaintance with Greek was limited to what he had acquired from reading the Septuagint, and conversing mainly with Greek speaking Hebrews; whereas he wrote his Gospel a quarter of a century later, when he had resided long in Ephesus, and had much intercourse with those to whom Greek was the native tongue.

*** [Fresh from a perusal of " Discussions on the Apocalypse," (1893), we are more than ever convinced that the internal evidence leaves us no choice between an earlier and later date for the appearance of the book, and that too much weight has been put upon the Irenaeus tradition]**

In comparing the matter of the books, we must remember that John is not strictly their author, and that the purpose of the two is worlds asunder. The Gospel gives us only some thirty days of our Lord's Judean ministry, whereas the Apocalypse is strictly limited to a dramatic presentation of the double judgement which closed a dispensation and opened a new epoch to the world. Of course, the question must arise — Why did John omit from his Gospel this great field of eschatological teaching, especially seeing it bulks ? so largely in the other three Gospels ?

Page 258 - Why is there no Apocalypse in the Gospel ? - The answer is simple enough. Granted that this fourth Gospel is not written until the other three have become the property of the universal Church, and so long after the fall of Jerusalem that the dispensational coming of Christ has lost much of its interest and freshness, and it will be evident that the author cannot think it needful to draw up another record of discourses which have already been so faithfully reported and have so largely served their purpose and been fulfilled. Of course, this silence of John's Gospel

as to our Lord's dispensational teaching cannot be easily justified if the contents of the Apocalypse and Matt. 24. and 25. refer to a coming that is to lie before the Church for twenty centuries, and a judgement still future for the world. St. John, in that case, must have felt the permanent importance of that doctrine for the Church, and his silence would be inexplicable. But if these other writings bear only on the crisis of the consummation of the Jewish age, and the introduction of a dispensation characterised by the universal presence of God in Christ, then it must surely have seemed to St. John to be a needless task to reiterate teaching sufficiently well known, and so palpably fulfilled some thirty years before.

His Gospel was especially bound to be vacant of all lengthy references to "*the wrath to come*," the demolition of the temple, and "*the end of the age*," in short, what has somewhat contemptuously been called "*Jewish Apocalyptic ideas*," if years before its author had published the Apocalypse to the Church.

Page 259 - The Coming, in the Gospel - He would naturally feel that the time was past for reporting afresh such prophetic intimations, since he had long before written out the key to their fulfillment as the events were transpiring before the eyes of his own generation. Thus does it seem inevitable, in our judgement, that Apocalyptic teaching must be largely absent from any very late and genuine Gospel attributed to St. John.

Notwithstanding these necessary differences, it will be found that the fourth Gospel contains some remarkable and strongly characteristic references to the dispensational coming of Christ. John remembers Christ's prophetic forecast to the woman of Samaria, that His mission would wrest the worship of God from the hands of a hereditary priesthood and from local limitations, by revealing God as a Father who imparts His presence to the soul that comes to Him in spirit and in truth. "*The hour cometh*" is an index finger pointing to the dispensational judgement on Jerusalem which ends the age of local cults, and introduces the Parousia or age of universal presence.

In no other way could the localisation of God be abolished than by the destruction of the temple, and the imposition of a situation which made its renewal impossible to the Jew. Beyond such broad and lofty references as this, but little is said of the Second Coming in its more familiar aspects. But in chapters 24-26. there are many interesting notices of the aspect which alone had any interest for John when his Gospel was compiled. It is too commonly supposed that this long discourse refers to a merely subjective and spiritual coming to His individual disciples.

Page 260 - Christ's Heavenly Mission - But our Lord recognizes two degrees of presence according to the well knowing saying, "*Lo, I am with*

you always, even to the end of age," — one subjective by His spirit, which is before *"the end of the age,"* and the other visual and personal by a meeting face to face when the age comes to an end.

Where Christ says *"I am with you,"* He promises the subjective blessing of His presence; but where He says, *"You will be with me,"* He means the open vision of His face in the prepared place in His Father's house.

The former is the presence vouchsafed to His personal disciples up till the consummation of the age; the latter is the meeting and visible communion of the saints caught up to be for ever with the Lord in their eternal home. In the beginning of chap 14. our Lord distinctly intimates His ascension into heavenly glory. *"I go to prepare a place for you."*

In the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Apocalypse brief references are made to this heavenly mission, but beyond hints of a purgation and a warfare in which Satan is cast out, there is no clear light. As soon, however, as this preparation is completed, Christ comes to His disciples to take them where He is, *"that they may behold His glory."*

This coming is certainly not to this material world, any more than Christ's permanent dwelling place is to be henceforth on the earth. The disciples to whom Christ comes are not supposed to be living in flesh and blood. Our Lord told them plainly that before *"the end of the age,"* some of them would be killed, others have tasted death in the course of nature. Peter was assured of martyrdom before His coming; John had a hopeful intimation of the possibility of being spared until that time (21.22).

Page 261 - The Length of His Heavenly Absence - Our Lord must therefore have been looking upon His disciples as having for the most part passed through death and entered upon Hades when His promise would be fulfilled *"I will come to you."* Indeed, almost in as many words, He asserts the fact. He tells them that they know the way by which it is needful to journey to the Father. To their protest of ignorance, He answers that they must go as He goes Himself, through the Cross or its shadow, down by the tomb, upward in the quickening of the resurrection life, that is the only pathway to the stars.

There is no single hint of any shorter or more pleasing way to the incorruptible and eternal life of Heaven. John might live until the Master came; but even John must die like other men, and be caught up to meet his Lord only by putting off his earthly tabernacle for his house which is from heaven. Does our Lord give any hint as to what length of time may elapse before He comes to give His disciples this glorious resurrection ? We have seen that on a certain occasion our Lord covertly implied that His coming would be after St. Peter's death and before St. John's.

In this same chapter we have a definite assurance to this effect: "*Yet a little while and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me; because I live ye shall live also.*" (5.19.) In all fairness this "*little while*" should be referred to the time between His own ascension and the time when they should "*live*" and "*behold Him.*" That the disciples read our Lord's meaning thus seems evident from Judas' question: "*What is happened that thou wilt SOON manifest Thyself to us and not unto the world ?*" (5.22).

This manifestation is no mere subjective feeling, but an open and personal revelation. It does not refer to the occasional appearances of the post-resurrection days, but to a meeting of a permanent and final character, when the disciples "*live*" in their resurrection life.

Page 262 - "A Little While" - The same encouraging assurance is repeated: "*A little while and ye behold me no more, and again a little while and ye shall see me.*" (16.16.) The reason given for this absence and subsequent meeting is: "*Because I go to the Father,*" i.e.. He ascends into divine conditions and becomes imperceptible to flesh and blood, but in this very ascension into complete Divinity He becomes the resurrection and the life of all believers, and thereby insures their meeting by organic incorporation into His own glorious life. In this open meeting is fulfilled the promise of the angels at the moment of our Lord's ascension: "*This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.*"

He would come openly and visibly in His glory to take them up into the glories of the heavenly home; He would open the gates of death and set His waiting disciples free; lead them up into the green pastures and the still waters of the eternal home.

This meaning, we confess, is not that which carries with it the names of our best recent interpreters. Dr. Godet gives his view in a sentence. "*The first little while ends at the death of Jesus, the second has for its limit Pentecost.*" But how could our Lord say so absolutely of two days' absence in death, "*Ye see me NO MORE*"?

Then, what of our Lord's appearances after the resurrection belonging to the seeing of neither period ? Besides, this puts two different senses upon the word "*see*" — the first being ordinary eyesight of the body and the second mental apprehension.

Page 263 - "Ye shall see Me" - Dr. Westcott makes the second "*little while*" begin at the resurrection, but creates fresh objections by making "*Ye shall see Me*" carry three different senses — the vision of the risen Christ; clearer apprehension by the gift of the Spirit; and open vision at Christ's personal return. Dr. Wendt contends at length that Jesus never "*predicted transient appearances to his disciples after death,*" [" Teaching of

Jesus," Vol. II. p. 302.] and probably he is right; but he is most certainly wrong when he interprets the saying of the spiritual indwelling of Christ in His disciples. Against all three expositors we more than question the right to apply the verb *optomai* to intellectual apprehension. It is the choice expression of St. John for open spirit sight. We utterly refuse, besides, to admit that when our Lord is speaking of parting and subsequent meeting, He could possibly be so inaccurate as to mean by "*Ye shall see Me*" — a fuller apprehension of His nature. If this were a legitimate interpretation, then we ought to interpret "*Ye shall not see Me*" as a state of growing ignorance !

Our Lord can refer in both cases only to open vision of His person; and the first "*little while*" must cover the period up to His ascension, from which point only is He seen no more, and the next "*little while*" must relate to the period between His ascension and the disciples' meeting with their Lord in the unseen when He descends for them to raise them up into His heavenly life.

If this be the right interpretation of our Saviour's teaching, it follows that He must certainly have taught His disciples to look for a resurrection of the dead, accompanied by a judgement and apportionment of destinies, soon after His ascension into Heaven. His coming before long to them in the state of death, and their translation into heavenly glory, could hardly be dis severed from the reward of all God's saints and the punishment of His foes.

Page 264 - Impending Judgement - An age or dispensation could not fitly end without a judicial estimate of its results. If the living generation were to be judged, ought not all the generations of the dead ? Messiah could not be supposed to take His personal disciples out of Hades and leave Abraham, Moses, and Isaiah, in its unhallowed shades; nor can it be conceived that the Old Testament saints had entered on their promised rest before the Messiah had "*prepared a place*" for them. All these considerations lead us to the conclusion that our Lord must have taught that there was ere long to be a general resurrection and judgement of the dead.

Such was indeed the case. The healing of an impotent man on the Sabbath day led the Jews to murmur against Christ, and depreciate His claims to anything like Divinity. (Chap 5.) In the face of this revolt, our Lord asserted all the more strenuously His personal dignity and supreme executive power. His powers ran parallel with the peculiar functions of the Deity. He could not only heal the impotent, but they would shortly see whomsoever of the dead He chose to call upon answering His voice and rising into life.

This saying is inane, frittered away by most expositors into the meaning that Christ would shortly show the Jews that He could regenerate the bad, produce conversions! We cannot imagine why they should "*marvel*" at the production of a moral change upon character.

Page 265 - Impending Resurrection - Surely such a thing was not utterly unheard of in Judea. Much less can we see how they should marvel more at such a change than at the sudden cure of an impotent man; but we can easily imagine the mocking look and incredulous shrug with which His claim of power to raise the dead was heard.

The answer to their scornful unbelief was more imperious still: "*The hour cometh in which all that are in their tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done ill unto the resurrection of judgement*" (28). Our Lord claims nothing less than the approaching exercise of the function of apportioning all the dead to their merited destinies.

He is soon to be "*executing judgement.*" "*The HOUR cometh*" is the signal of the *immanence* of a general judgement, as it was the measure of the nearness of the new dispensation when Jerusalem would cease to be a religious shrine, in the address to the woman of Samaria. The two events are indeed coincident.

When "*judgement begins at the house of God*" on earth it begins also with "*the dead.*" Here then we see when our Lord was to take His disciples to Himself; when the saints were to enter on "*the Sabbath that remaineth*" — when those who waited for the hope of Israel were to be "*perfected.*" In the visible end of the Judaic age and the official introduction of the Christian, we find the period when Christ first opened heaven to all believers, and the unbelieving dead beheld themselves shut out of the glories of that life.

Page 266 - When is the " Last Day" ? - Is it not strange that with so much open light expositors will for the most part continue to stumble over such a direct and simple reference to the time of the resurrection as that which our Lord repeats so frequently in the pages of St. John — "*I will raise him up at the last day.*" What accuracy can there possibly be in that too popular interpretation of "*the last day*" — "*When all human interests cease*" (Westcott, 11.24). When will such a void and chaotic day arrive? Is the Creator purposing to depopulate the globe before at least the earth is scorched to a cinder by too close proximity to the sun ?

Are the saints to wait until the crack of doom in some imperfect or purgatorial state ? Can the "*little while*" honestly be interpreted by myriads of millennia of years ? Has Abraham not yet found the "*city which*

hath foundations " ? Have Peter, Paul, and John not yet been sought in the region of the dead by their Divine Deliverer? Are they still orphans — still disembodied — still sighing for the vision of Christ's face ? Certainly this is so, if Christ does not come to raise His people out of Hades till ***" the day when all human interests cease."***

"The last day" is easily interpreted. It is the last day of the age, the Judaic age then running, and was a popular phrase for the time when the higher Messianic privileges would be given to the people of God. To mistake its meaning is inexcusable, seeing that almost all the Apostles write of ***" the last time "*** and ***" the last day "*** as being present for themselves; and especially when John himself, so notably in his first epistle, draws his readers' attention to the fact that the old world is in its dying throes, the darkness of the Devil's reign fast passing away before the true light of the Gospel's morning, and that not only the ***" last day "*** but the ***" last hour"*** of the day has come (2.18).

Page 267 - St. John's Epistles - And here let us take a brief survey of what John teaches in his epistles. There remains no authentic tradition as to the date of these letters, and we must judge of the period from the contents as we find them. All the evidence points us to some time between the writing of the Apocalypse and the Gospel. To all appearance Jerusalem is being rapidly pulverized by the Roman power, if it has not actually fallen. The darkness of the old age is passing away and the light of the better day is already shining. What Paul wrote of as ***" the latter days,"*** days of apostasy and tribulation, are now come; and indeed to John are nearly past. With him it is ***" the last hour."***

One of the distinctive notes by which the apostle recognized his whereabouts was the visible advent of Antichrist. He tells his readers that the advent of this power is plainly marked in their prophetic charts, and now that it is visibly at work the Lord must be at hand, indeed the Lord is already come and re-quickenening the energies of His church (1 John 5.20).

The whole tone of the epistle is firm and confident of the nearness of Christ, and already the apostle is rejoicing in a victory almost completely won. He therefore urges his readers to endure wrong patiently a little longer. If ***" the last hour "*** was not come, he must have woefully misconceived the situation; and there could have been no cogency in his exhortations or truth in his promises of immediate relief. Here endeth our survey of the writings of St. John.

Page 268 - The Harmony of St. John's Writings - And how will the results compare ? Without hesitation we must answer that they agree with the utmost precision. In the Apocalypse we have the second Advent as it transpires in both the worlds of the living and the dead.

At the end of chapter 11. when Jerusalem is judged, the world becomes Christ's Kingdom, *i.e. the Gospel age begins, the dead are judged, the saints rewarded, and heaven directly opened to mankind. The same order reigns in the more positive representation of Christ's coming which begins with chapter 20.* — the dead are judged and the saints glorified before the vision of the New Jerusalem, or the advent of the Christian dispensation on the earth.

The Gospel deals only with the side of the advent which affects those in the unseen, but as to manner and time is in strictest agreement with the Apocalypse. The epistles land us in the heat of the crisis — the strictly transitional moment between the Judaic and Christian ages; and thus these three agree in one.

They speak alike of a critical day at hand, the close of the Mosaic age, and the introduction of a brighter and more potent measure of the reign of God. They tell us of a mighty work of redemption that Christ wrought soon after His ascension into Heaven, and gratify the longings of our souls with the assurance that Death and Hades have yielded up their prey; so that those dear disciples and waiting saints of Old Testament times — yes, and all who have since died in the ripeness of discipleship — have already entered into rest, and been blessed with the vision of their Saviour's face.

MATTHEW, MARK, AND LUKE

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

Page 269 - WIDE as are the differences acknowledged to exist between the form and spirit of the teaching of Christ in the Synoptics and in St. John's Gospel, at no point is the divergence more notorious than in that field of thought we have been traversing in these pages. We are no longer in the great unseen world seeing Christ meeting with His lost disciples, and judging all the generations of the dead; but among the citizens of this world, watching the devolution of the ages, the creation of a new heaven and new earth, in transactions that we shall see are identical with much that we have found in the Apocalypse. This difference, at which many express astonishment, perhaps needs explanation, but it in no way throws discredit on the historical accuracy of the one evangelist or the other.

The Synoptic Gospels were evidently written before the destruction of Jerusalem. **They betray no particular knowledge of that event, or of the state of things which supervened.** They abound with statements pointing to an impending dispensational crisis, and are warm with the voice of warning and entreaty to be ready for that event.

Page 270 - Messiah and His Days - This would seem to indicate that they were written with a view to explain to those then living the claims of Christ, and the manner in which His mediatorial Messianic office was about to be assumed. The motive justifies the contents, leaving the authors, who believed with all their hearts in the prophetic truthfulness of Jesus, no option but to emphasise teaching which was of such supreme importance for their contemporaries. Not only so, but since as a matter of fact these prophesied events were understood to take place as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, it was natural that the earlier evangelists should bring forward whatever in Christ's words or works seemed most surely to be the realization of ancient prophecy. Hence much, both as to form and substance, of the contents of the Synoptics.

Messiah and His days is the one ideal of Hebrew thought. His coming is set forth under the twofold aspect of deliverance and judgement — the opening of prison doors and the day of vengeance of our God. Most fitly, then, the Hebrew canon closes with a brilliant prophecy of the Lord coming suddenly to His temple, as a fire that burns up the wicked like stubble, while it shines as a sun of righteousness to those who fear His name. Only one solitary sign of warning is to be given as a fore-intimation of the approach of this solemn judgement time — the appearance of Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

These are the persons by whom, and the work by which, the long promised ideal of Israel was to be realized; but as events have proved, in a manner which no one anticipated before the time.

Page 271 - John the Baptist - Let us proceed to see how, according to our Gospels, this prophecy is to be fulfilled.

1. Silent centuries have passed. The process of divine revelation begins anew. If the time of fulfillment is approaching, a striking personality, a central figure of commanding influence, must appear upon the field.

In the beginning of the Gospel narrative we seem to find the answering form. John the Baptist is vigorously proclaiming His message of repentance, and enforcing it with dreadful threatenings of impending woe. *"The wrath ABOUT to come"* (see the Greek) is the text of every sermon. Now, he says, the axe is laid at the root of the trees, and every worthless tree is about to be cast into the fire.

He makes no claim to be able to command the furies. One cometh *"whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing-floor; and He will gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire."* Thus John pursues his ministry in *"the power and spirit of Elias,"* ringing out his two-edged message, *"The kingdom of God is at hand,"* and *"God's judgement slumbers not."* We know not whether the popular leaders were quite alive to the significance of this fiery prophetic presence in their midst; but, at all events, they had their suspicions, and a general impression, perhaps ill to explain, that the days of Messiah were at hand. A deputation from them interviewed the Baptist, and bluntly put the question *"Art thou Elijah?"* and the preacher, taking their question as they meant it, bluntly answered — *"No."*

Page 272 - Elias Recognised - Perhaps the prophet did not recognise his mission; but this is scarcely probable, seeing that by this time he had recognised Jesus as Messiah. His denial certainly does not, as some will have it, invalidate his Elijah ministry, for Christ Himself recognized the prophetic *role* which had fallen on John. *"This is he of whom it is written, Behold I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee."*

Thus does our Lord in the directest manner identify John with the promised messenger of Malachi who precedes by a little while the great Messianic judgement by which the wicked are consumed and the righteous left in peace to carry on God's kingdom on the earth. But anticipating great unwillingness to receive the truth, on the part even of His disciples, He says again, more plainly, *"And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah which is to come"* (Matt 9.) * [The Greek reads: *"This is Elijah which is soon to come."* The explanation of this peculiar form of

speech seems to be, that it was a popular saying at the time, "Elijah is soon to come," and that our Lord here means to say — John is the Elijah that the people are expecting soon.]

Later on, the disciples ask Him: "*Why say the scribes Elijah must first come ? [i.e., If you are the Messiah and your advent as near as you say]. And He answered and said, Elijah indeed cometh, and shall restore all things; but I say unto you that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not*" (Matt 17.)

See, then, what the actual situation is in the days of Christ. Standing back there in thought, we are in the brief interregnum between the appearance of Elijah and the coming of Messiah to burn the land with fire. The way of the Lord has already been prepared; and therefore there must be at this point, according to Hebrew prophecy and our Lord's interpretation of John's mission, an unparalleled crisis impending in Jewish history, in which "*God will come as a mighty One, and His reward is with Him*" (Isa 40.10; compare Rev. 20.12, where the last clause is applied to the coming of Christ).

Page 273 - The Training of the Twelve - 2. It is hardly needful to do more than sketch out briefly the facts that show how thoroughly our Lord entered into the national situation as we have described it. He began His ministry by re-asserting the prophet's message: "*Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" All through His early Galilean ministry He preached with diligence "*the good tidings of the kingdom*" in its three blessed characteristics — it was to be spiritual, impartial and therefore universal, and it was near. A little later on, we get very definite information as to the doctrine of the kingdom in which the Twelve were trained.

They are being sent out on an evangelizing tour through Palestine, and are directed to preach, saying "*The kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. 10) In the same connection they are assured that the kingdom of God is so near that "*they shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.*" From such statements it is seen that the coming of the kingdom and the coming of the Son of Man are one and the same idea, (2) that the kingdom is to come while these very disciples are engaged in preaching the gospel, and (3) that they will scarcely have been able to cover the whole field of the people of Israel before the end. This emphatic teaching was supplemented by much information all tending to the same effect. The generation then alive were for the most part to reject the Christ, and instead of salvation, as God proposed, to reap judgement worse than that of Sodom or Nineveh.

Page 274 - The Coming of the Kingdom - Instead of procuring the sons of Abraham for the people of His kingdom, Messiah is "*to declare*

judgement to the Gentiles and lead it unto victory until the Gentiles hope in Him." (Matt 12.) Accordingly, in His parables, our Lord teaches that the kingdom will be realized in a harvest of the land in which the bad, like worthless tares, are given up to burning, and the good, like wheat, kept for the garner; or again like fish in a net, assorted into the good which are kept and the bad which are thrown away. *"So,"* He says, *"shall it be at the consummation of the age,"* — the Son of Man will come, as the Forerunner said, with His fan and purge out the chaff, and then the righteous shall shine forth as the lights of the world.

This consummation is everywhere in the Gospels declared to be at hand. it is the coming of the kingdom; or in other words, *"the coming of the Son of Man in His kingdom."* Christ Himself was following up the work of John in sowing the seed of the word and preparing a people for His Name; the ripening of the elect who receive the word into fitness for a spiritual kingdom is to be the sign for judgement to begin; and the kingdom is objectively or historically constituted when the harvest of judgement and salvation is reaped. Then the kingdom runs its prophetic course towards universal victory, according to the parables of the mustard seed and leaven — all the birds of heaven lodge in its branches, and all the meal of humanity is leavened with its life. Now, this teaching seems beyond misapprehension, but as if to make assurance doubly sure, our Lord carried His explicitness still farther.

Page 275 - The Coming within a lifetime - When the time had come for telling His disciples that He must be killed in Jerusalem, He exhorted them to show the same fidelity to the truth, and encouraged them even to lay down their lives, with the stimulating promise that He was **SOON** to reward His servants. We quote the passage in full, making a needful alteration on the translation: *"For SOON the Son of Man shall; come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He render unto every man according to his doing. Verily I say unto you, There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."* (Matt 19.27,28).

What else could these words mean for the disciples, with their previous instruction, but that while some years would pass and thin the numbers of the living before His Second Coming, yet this Coming would certainly transpire within the boundary of the lifetime of the younger of them standing there; and that, alive or dead at the crisis, all of them proving faithful to the end would reap a rich reward? Within six days the disciples put their question, What, then, about Elias, who is to come before the great and notable day of Thy Coming? and received the answer, *"Elias is already come and gone!"* We need not wonder that, on the back of such startling announcements, the disciples came to Jesus with the pertinent

and practical question, **"Who is greatest in the kingdom ?"** and that certain of them were already making sinister provisions to occupy the highest places when the kingdom came.

Page 276 - Typical Misunderstandings – 3. The pitiful confusion which exists in the highest theological quarters upon the subject of the kingdom's advent demands that we shall strive to make the truth still more explicit.

As Examples of the serious misunderstandings which are rife, we shall glance at two recent works by authors who have carefully studied the life and teaching of Jesus historically — *The Kingdom of God*, by Dr. Bruce, the chapter on **"The Parousia and the Christian Era,"** and *The Teaching of Jesus*, by Dr. Wendt, the chapter on **"The Nature and Advent of the Kingdom."** The former expresses the common perplexity of theologians thus: — **" There is no subject on which it is more difficult to ascertain the teaching of Christ than that which relates to the future of the kingdom."** Neither of these able scholars can offer us a reasonable solution of the difficulty, for the very good reason that it is entirely of their own creation. Dr. Wendt charges the Evangelists with giving us bungled reports of the Master's sayings, and finds, as well, that He **"developed,"** that is, changed His opinion as to the coming of His kingdom. Now, we deny that there is the slightest visible trace of such a development. Certainly, our Lord never was under the pitiable delusion that His kingdom would come in His own and His disciples life-time through a general acceptance of His Messiahship by the Jews; nor, later, of believing that He would die, but that His kingdom would come, and Himself return to the earth, in that very generation, **" at the close of the earthly development of the kingdom of God."** (397-8)

Page 277 - Typical Misunderstandings - As to the earlier supposed belief, why, John the Baptist, echoing Malachi, knew better, and prophesied the demolition of the Judaic Institution by axe and fire; and, as to the later, while it closely approximates the truth at points, it is the grossest assumption to charge Christ with the notion that His kingdom would close its development in one brief life time, in the face of His distinct intimation that His disciples would be hated and killed, and that when the Son of Man came He would not find faith in the land; and it is an inexcusable blunder to associate Christ's coming with the *close* of His earthly kingdom in the face of the many passages which universally connect it with its official initiation.

Dr. Bruce, careful and patient student as he is, fairly wanders in a maze between what seems to him contradictory teachings as to the consummation of the kingdom — here, by **"an early catastrophe,"** and there, by **"a lengthened history."** He offers us the solution of *bad reporting*

by the Evangelists, and **two second comings**, one **SOON**, and another **DELAYED** to some indefinite period which has not yet arrived. The features of these two comings are supposed to be so jumbled together that it is now almost impossible to dis sever them and adjust them in their appropriate places. For this third, far-distant coming, the proofs relied upon are those passages which speak of the Parousia as *delayed*.

But how is it that the Parousia is never spoken of as delayed through generation after generation ? It is delayed in appearance only *to some of those to whom Christ speaks*; and *never* in one single case delayed *beyond the limits of an individual life*. Those in whose eyes it is delayed are either people who have been expecting it, and have often been aroused by false alarms, and, of course, like every eager watcher, thought the time unreasonably long; or people like the upper servant who wish the coming to be delayed, and whose wish is father to the thought.

Page 278 - The Parables of Delay - In agreement with this, it is a decisive feature of every Bible reference that *those to whom it seems delayed are the very persons to whom it comes* ! Can this possibly be the description of a Parousia which is delayed over thirty or forty Christian generations ? Nay, it is simply that very Parousia which was to be **SOON, within a generation**, for which many were wearying, but which, as always happens to the eager, did not answer sharply to their hasty expectations, while it came too soon to those who wished delay. Indeed, the express motive of these warnings of delay is a call to **"watchfulness,"** but the demand for watchfulness is essentially implicative of unlooked for nearness which takes one by surprise.

Therefore the very proofs relied upon for a long delayed Parousia disprove the doctrine contended for. The solution of this question is not far to seek, and it would be surprising that so many life long students should have missed it, if it were not that we all know too well the blinding effects of being trained in false traditional ideas. Approach the Parousia from the standpoint of the kingdom, and this is how its history unrolls itself.

The kingdom, as a reign of God within the heart, came to earth in Christ Himself, and grew as men's hearts opened to the Spirit of God. This subjective form of the kingdom is not, however, the prevalent form in the Synoptic Gospels. The kingdom is there conceived in its distinctively Christian form, as Christ's mediatorial reign, a new dispensation of divine truth and power, ministered for God's glory and man's salvation.

Page 279 - How the Kingdom Comes - This kingdom **as a historically constituted dispensation**, most certainly comes by what Dr. Bruce calls "**an early catastrophe**," and Dr. Wendt "**a sudden miraculous interposition of God**." And why should it not? We might even ask, Could it come after any

other fashion? Did not a previous divine dispensation hold the field ? Did not the Old Testament prophesy the latter's destruction by a catastrophe — a fire that would burn as an oven? Did not Christ say, that, those who administered it were determined to maintain it, and had refused to give it up to the rightful heir ? In that case, could it be taken from them otherwise than by violence, "*a catastrophe,*" "*a divine interposition ;*" and do not the Synoptics brim with the announcement that God is to send His armies and cast those murderous usurpers out, and give His kingdom unto another people ?

This divine assault is Israel's judgement day, the great day of the Lord, the fire which Christ came to cast into the land so that it should be turned into Gehenna, the burning of the chaff and tares after the good wheat in Israel is gathered into Christ's garner. Notice, however, that this catastrophe is not called in Scripture the "*consummation*" of Christ's kingdom, but of the Jewish age then current. Christ's kingdom knows no consummation in the sense of coming to an end, but steadily expands according to those many parables in which its "*lengthened history*" is described. There is no end to the Christian world. Christ's kingdom takes its official and historical beginning in a catastrophe which visibly ends the effete Mosaic eon; its mission henceforth is to conquer men of every tongue and tribe, and hold the whole earth in possession, time without end.

Page 280 - Our Lord's Last Prophecy - Here is the simple key to all the seeming confusion of New Testament teaching; and it is to be deeply regretted that this key has not been found as yet by those who have the teaching of our students of divinity, and whose literary arts give them the public ear, for it puts a speedy end to that really unscholarly licence which reflects on the accuracy of the evangelists, charges such as Paul with ignorance, and even imputes mistakes to Christ on matters which He taught with confidence and deliberation.

4. At length our Lord is in Jerusalem to meet His death. There His teaching as to His kingdom is beyond all mistake. The chief priests and elders are told that when they have killed Him they are to look soon after for the day of their national destruction. "*The kingdom of God,*" He says, "*shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*" This desolation of Israel is the coming of the Lord in the fires of judgement. The coming of God's kingdom is the official withdrawal of the broken covenant from the Jews and its rejuvenescence in the hearts of regenerated Gentiles. The date of this calamitous yet blessed tranference is sternly fixed:— "*All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, your house is left unto you desolate !*" Nowhere up to this last public discourse, is there a syllable removing the coming of Christ in His kingdom to a distant date, or placing it beyond the experience

of the men to whom Christ then spake. Occasionally we find hints that this coming is a two sided event — bearing upon the dead as surely as the living, and creating a kingdom there as well as here; but never are the two sides severed as to time, or other than one grand event, telling simultaneously in both worlds, and with no dubiety as to its approximate date and the outward signs which accompany it.

Page 281 - The Disciples Questions - With teaching running on such plain lines, the disciples standpoint may be easily understood in putting the questions recorded in the beginning of Matt 24. Strangely enough, as it seems to us, those questions have been commonly misunderstood; and exegetes have therefore found the interpretation of our Lord's reply one of the most puzzling tasks presented by New Testament Scripture. Let us see whether there is not a simple and clear solution of this perplexity.

The disciples, warned so frequently of coming troubles, were not, like the great men in Jerusalem, able to laugh at the threats of Christ. Hence, they were eager to draw the fullest information from the Master. Holding on to the subject on which the Lord had just been speaking, they said to him, ***"Before you leave the Temple will you not come round and see the splendid masonry? Have you noticed that massive stone in the south-west corner of the wall — thirty feet and more by eight ? Was there ever such wondrous masonry ! Why, it will be beyond the power of time to harm such ponderous work as that !"*** The only answer was a sigh, — ***"There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."*** Curiosity was only the more excited by this doleful prophecy; but they dropped the subject for a more convenient moment, which soon came to them in the quiet of a short breathing space on the side of Olivet, probably in sight of the glittering splendour of the Temple buildings.

Page 283 - Mistaken Meaning's - Two or three of them, anxious to probe the matter to the core, opened a fire of questions, the purport of which is all summed up in this — ***"When shall these things be ? How shall we know that the time approaches when the house of God shall be made desolate, and Thy time be come, and the age brought to its consummation ? Tell us, that being fore-warned we may be fore-armed against that dreadful time."*** There is nothing fresh or out of the way in these questions. They concern the most ordinary common-places of our Saviour's teaching. Over and over again, they had been instructed, on every substantial point, and only one thing seemed wanting to the perfection of their knowledge, a clearer indication of the signs that would precede the climax, and enable them to be the more on the alert.

Two mistakes have however vitiated the common interpretation of their meaning and our Lord's reply. One of them arises from a wrong translation, or, on the part of Greek readers, a misapprehension of the

meaning of one phrase in the disciples' questions. Let it be noted that the disciples make no shadow of a reference to any imagined "**end of the world**" in a physical or material sense. No such idea was in their minds; their anticipations were entirely of the opposite character. What they ask concerns "**the end of the age.**" It is most unfortunate that the Revisers have retained the word *world* as the translation of *aion* in the New Testament. Only in one single instance out of many can the translation be in the least degree justified. On every ground, the only possible translation is that of the marginal reading — "**the consummation of the age ;**" and the phrase "**end of the world**" has all along been a trap for the popular mind (which even scholars like the two just criticized have not escaped), fixing it in the expectation of a material wreckage, which has no countenance in the Scriptures.

Page 283 - Mistaken Meaning's - Believing, as multitudes do, that our Lord predicts terrific physical revolutions as the accompaniments of His coining, their entire conception of His **Parousia** has taken a form prolific of very bad results.

The second mistake is still more widely spread. Many scholars who perceive that the disciples are not concerned with "**the end of the world,**" but with "**the consummation of the age,**" nevertheless fall into the serious error of importing into the disciples questions two or three different subjects. They are thus forced to find two or three different answers in our Lord's reply, so inextricably mixed, it seems, that hardly two expositors of any self reliance can agree in discriminating this from that, or as to whether a certain passage does or does not refer to two events lying thousands of years apart, but which our Lord, if He has not been misreported, is pleased to throw together because analogous in their nature.

In short, they make the serious slip of supposing that the coming of the Son of Man has no connection in time with the destruction of Jerusalem and the abrogation of the Mosaic ritual; and the still less excusable slip of thinking that by "**the consummation of the age**" the disciples meant the end of an age which had only then begun and is running at this present day, and which, therefore, lay twenty or thirty millennia away from the subject of question one, the destruction of Jerusalem. The disorder thus introduced into Christ's reply, when the questions are really one and deal with a series of phenomena running simultaneously to fulfillment, cannot easily be imagined.

Page 284 - A Specimen Exposition - The task, indeed, quite overmasters the interpreter, and almost everyone going upon this hypothesis confesses his perplexity. The more commentaries of this order

one consults, the more one is puzzled; and the dazed feeling grows that the meaning is playing at hide and seek with us. In illustration, let us take a recent able work on Matthew's Gospel and watch the author's method. He pleads that the **"Ye shall SOON hear of wars and rumours of wars — the famines, the earthquakes, the false prophets, and persecutions"** of which the disciples are warned — refer, all of them more to a future age, than to the period before Jerusalem's fall ! Then vv. 15-22, beginning, **"When, therefore, ye see,"** suddenly sweep backward, without warning, and refer to Jerusalem alone.

The next nine verses, beginning **"Then, if any man shall say to you,"** leap away forward to the end of the Gospel age, and of course are unfulfilled as yet. Ver. 32 takes us back to the actual crisis around Jerusalem; and in contradiction of the connected exposition, **"He is nigh"** (ver 3) is admitted to mean the coming of the Son of Man. Again, **"all these things "** which that generation shall see (ver. 34) concern Jerusalem alone; while in vv. 35 So to the end we are again whisked away, without warning, forward thousands of years. Thus tortuously proceeds this wayward and arbitrary exegesis. The **" ye,"** in which Christ addresses the men to whom He speaks, changes its reference backwards and forwards every now and then from them to a generation yet unborn; and the final **"Watch ye "** does not mean the audience of the hour, but believers who are to be alive in two or three thousand years !

Page 285 - The Disciples Meaning - And all this in the face of Luke's report of Christ's concluding words: **"Watch ye at every season, making supplication that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall SOON come to pass "** [see Greek], **"and to stand before the Son of Man."** If the bulk of the events foretold lay twenty centuries away, what need to pray that they should escape them ? And if they actually did escape the trials of their time through watchfulness, how could escaping wars, famines, and persecutions, make them *stand before the Son of Man*, if He was not coming in their day, but in three thousand years ?

Such are the tremendous exegetical difficulties of this system of interpretation. Would that the difficulties raised were only exegetical ! We are constrained to ask — What wiser could the disciples be for an answer which they could not understand? or what wiser are we, their successors, if the answer was meant for us? Such an answer is not in keeping with the intellectual power or the moral honesty of Christ; but the answer really given we shall see was full and particular, without mystery or dubiety, so clear that he who runs may read.

5. Our immediate business at this stage is to see that we clearly understand the meaning of the questions which our Lord was called upon

to answer. " *When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Thy Presence and* [no article in the Greek] *completion of the age ?* "

That this is the most literal rendering possible of the words will scarcely be denied.

Page 286 - The Questions really One - (a) The *first* clause concerns, by unanimous consent, the desolation of the Temple, of which Jesus has just been speaking. The *second* is not concerned with the COMING of Christ as the mere event of a moment, but with the **PRESENCE of Christ** as a permanent and abiding blessing with His Church. The *time* is not, even in form, a separate question, but is treated as an adjunct of the *second*. The Presence of Christ implies the completion of the previous age. Therefore, it is evident that " *the presence of Christ* " carries here a dispensational sense, equivalent to Christ's age, as succeeding the Mosaic, the presence of Christ's kingdom, or mediatorial reign. Accordingly, **ONE sign** indicates that both events have happened — the Mosaic age having necessarily ended with the presence of the Christian. Now, handle these questions as you will, it cannot be denied that they enquire as to the TIME of one event alone.

The disciples were no doubt intensely anxious to know *the time* of Christ's Presence and the completion of the age, yet they did not ask this question. Why were they content with knowing only *the time* of Jerusalem's destruction ? For the very satisfactory reason that they identified the two as occurring in very close proximity. They required to know the *time* of one event only in order to know the time of both; but in addition to the *when*, they thought it well to know the *sign* which would make it perfectly self-evident that Christ's age or kingdom had been introduced in the plenitude of its powers. If this really is the relationship of the questions, it settles at one sweep, their general interpretation. There is but *one* double-branched question and not three. The disciples are concerned about only *one* event, of which they wish to know **the when ? and what the sign ?**

Page 287 - Time and the Sign - They clearly proceed upon the assumption that the desolation of the Temple is not distant, and that no measurable interval lies between that event and the *Parousia* and end of the age. Even Dr. Bruce, who tears the answer asunder limb from limb, admits that "*the three questions are apparently assumed by the questioners to be equivalent in import.*" It seems to be perfectly evident that our Lord heard them in this identical sense. From His well known candour we must expect a plain correction, if the disciples are here proceeding upon fallacious assumptions. From the vigour and clearness of His judgement, we know that there will be no weak confusion in His answer. Therefore, if

there is no plain correction in the answer (and none is evident), there has been no mistake made by the questioners. If, too, the answer proceeds clearly upon the assumption of a closeness or identity as to time of the **parousia** with the destruction of Jerusalem, the disciples must have put their questions in that sense; and the answer must be interpreted with that simple meaning, whatever be the consequence to "**our little systems**," and the serious task of reconsideration it will impose upon our mistakes. That the answer does certainly run together the two events without any well marked dividing line, every competent exegete will admit; and this we claim to be a *prima-facie*. argument for our Lord's intention to express the close succession of the two in time.

(b) We submit, then, that the disciples could mean by "**the end of the age**" only that particular age or dispensation in which they lived. The Scripture ages are all marked off by the current order of things in the religious sphere.

Page 288 - The End of the Judaic Age - The disciples belonged to the day of Moses, of the Law and the Levitical Priesthood; the pre-Messianic age of Prophecy. Doubtless, they were well aware that when the Messiah came He was to institute a reformation that would be equivalent to a new heaven and new earth. This Messiah had already come to them; He had spoken plainly, in awe-inspiring terms, of the consummation of the existing state of things, and promised that all things written should speedily be fulfilled. With such a solemn tragedy in sight it is most improbable that they were casting their eyes forward upon the end of an age which had not then so much as dawned, and with whose end they and their people had no immediate concern.

It is commonly understood that this age of ours is a portion of the age in which they lived. In that case, either our age is Judaic or their age was Christian. The latter is no more tenable than the former. The disciples were not living in the fresh beginnings of an age, but in the last days of a dying one. Our Lord spake "**at the end of these days**." He offered His sacrifice "**in the end of the ages**." Therefore, there is no legitimate conclusion left to us but that these disciples were concerned about the completion of an age then hastening to its close, and in whose dying agonies they were individually involved. It would be strange indeed if the interests of these simple men overleaped the end of an age so close at hand to put questions concerning an end far distant in the future.

(c) These questions had been excited by our Lord's own thrilling discourses concerning the "**end of the age**."

Page 289 - The End of the Age - That end was synonymous with the coming of the kingdom of God, which they were assured was at hand. Its

approach was to be heralded by the travail-pangs of a fiery judgement that would purge it from the foulness of the place and people of its birth. (Matt 13.) This judgement would take place as soon as the elect wheat of the Jewish Church were ripened enough by Christian teaching to be easily separated from their social entanglements with the tares of Judaic formalists and unbelievers; and thus, first by spiritual and then by local separation, be saved from the deluge of fire that was to descend upon the land. Nor was the approximate period of this judgement left in any doubt. Our Lord's statements that He is **SOON** to come, and that **the kingdom is at hand**, all imply as well the nearness of the end of the age. In one case He is recorded as having said that sin against the Holy Ghost is forgiven "**neither in this age nor in the age ABOUT to come**" — that is, neither under the Mosaic nor Messianic measure of grace can it be anything but fatal to the soul's acceptance before God (Matt. 12.30).

That the disciples were quite on the watch for this approaching age, the age of the kingdom of God, up to the moment of Christ's death, is witnessed by the regretful remark of the two in the walk to Emmaus: "**We hoped that it was He which should SOON redeem Israel.**" This anticipation was revived by the Resurrection; and on the very Mount of Ascension they asked: "**Wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom unto Israel ?**" On the day of Pentecost Peter expressed the common faith that they were living in "**the last days,**" according to the prophecy of Joel; and that the wondrous outpouring of the Spirit they had just received was for the special purpose of ripening the good wheat of the Church, before the darkening of heaven and earth, which presaged "**the notable day of the Lord**" — the reaping of the harvest of the land.

Page 290 - The End Expected Soon - Our concern, at present, is not with the accuracy of the disciples' anticipations, but with their express convictions as to the end of the age; and we claim that they were expecting a near end to their age, an end which would transform existing Israel into the ideal Israel of the Scriptures. We claim also that our Lord's answer must be held to homologate this conviction, if it is not disclaimed. He who was the Truth would not have glossed over so serious a mistake, especially when it concerned the very point on which information was desired. Surely, if an age were to intervene between the desolation of the Temple and His presence, our Lord would not have answered as if both events were simultaneous, or as closely related as two sides of a shield.

(d) By another series of teachings the disciples had understood that the **parousia** was to be heralded by or be even coincident with the destruction of Jerusalem. What else mean the parables which say that the Lord is to go away and come again to judge His persecutors ? He is to send His armies and destroy them; to take the vineyard (the kingdom) and give it

unto others. This work of vengeance is to be the day of His triumph and vindication. His Pharisaic auditors knew well that He spoke of THEM, and prophesied that the kingdom would pass to the Gentiles in their time (Matt 21:43-46). We must credit the disciples with as quick an apprehension of their Master's meaning. The kingdom, thus redeemed, regenerated, and enlarged, was to constitute the new successive age.

Page 291 - The Right Chronological Standpoint - Accordingly,

"the coming of the Son of Man" has its equation in

= **"the age about to come"**

= **"the coming of His kingdom"**

= **"the kingdom of Heaven"**

= **Christ's mediatorial dispensation or reign,**

in which all things are summed up under Christ and administered by Him from the right hand of the Father. Such an age necessarily implied the destruction of the Temple as a *de facto* abrogation of the Mosaic mediatorship, and also the dispersion of the Jews, in order to secure the permanency of the sign of judgement. Christ's age begins where Moses' ends. The abrogation of the Mosaic covenant, seeing that it was unquestionably Divine in origin, is undeniable proof that Christ is indeed the Son of God, and that now He is invested with power and glory. Hence, the destruction of Jerusalem and the advent of the new age, or Christ's kingdom, are virtually coincident in time. With this finding, our Lord's answer is in strict agreement, and becomes at once self-luminous.

(e) In agreement herewith, let it be noted that the chronological standpoint of all the New Testament writers is in **"the end of the age."** The old world still abides with them. The Temple stands in all its glory defiant of the infant faith; and its elaborate services are **"as they were from the beginning."** Unbelieving Jews are mocking the Apostolic preachers, and demanding, — **"Where is the sign of His coming ?"** The answer of faith is: God has been patient for your sakes; but the old age has now nearly run its course. It is the last time — the last days — **and with John, the last hour.** The things that are, are to be shaken; the Temple and its priesthood to pass away. The time is nigh — the Lord is at hand — the Judge is at the door.

Page 292 - The Parousia and the Fall of Jerusalem - In the Book of Revelation, its actual accomplishment is portrayed in pictorial form to the opened eye of John, as a process already begun. Surely all this furnishes a faultless chain of evidence as to what the disciples meant by, **"What is the sign of Thy presence and completion of the age ?"**

(f) This interpretation of the disciples' meaning is strongly corroborated on turning to the corresponding passages in Mark 13. and Luke 21. There the questions are reduced in form: nothing being asked concerning Christ's **parousia** or the end of the age. We transcribe Mark's report from the Revised Version, and Luke's is substantially the same: "*When shall these things be ? and what the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished ?*" The *time* and the *sign* are here concerned, according to the context, only with the desolation of Jerusalem, and the answers reported by Mark and Luke embrace all the contents of the answer to the three in Matthew. The destruction of Jerusalem — the falling of the stars of heaven — the coming of the Son of Man — every notable feature is here in one close piece — woven, like our Lord's garment, without seam. Now, these two Gospels are of equal authority with the first — equally correct, and equally inspired. They were originally put into separate circulation; and must have been intended separately to convey the Lord's very truth to their readers. But if it be the case that the end of the age and the Lord's **parousia** are separated by two thousand years from the fall of Jerusalem — what accuracy, we might ask, is in the reports of the second and third Evangelists ? And how misleading they must have been to their early readers !

Page 293 - The Parousia and Temple Worship - It seems that we are shut up to hold either the conclusion to which exegetical despair has driven every candid expositor who clings to the orthodox view of the coming, in company with such free thinkers as Francis Newman, W. R. Greig, Dr. Martineau, and Matthew Arnold, that error has marred the Evangelists' reports; or else, that the questions in Matthew are one in import, and identical with the single subject of Mark and Luke.

(g) Finally, the matter must be tested by the ability of this interpretation to make our Lord's reply cogent, lucid, and of service to the disciples for whose sakes it was spoken — qualities that are lacking to the popular exposition of its meaning. The key of the whole position, as we deem it, lies in noticing the emphatic opposition here set up between the **TEMPLE** and the **PAROUSIA**. Their mutual attitude is not merely antithesis, but marked antagonism. The age then existing had for its soul, its inspiring genius, the Temple. There it stood, the centre of Israel's faith, — its glory, and its hope. Nowhere else was God; on no other altar could man offer sacrifice; at no other spot, receive heaven's blessing-. Such ideas had had, in the olden time, a happy educative influence on Israel; but they had served their time, and become obsolete. Worse than obsolete, they were fostering an idolatrous, inhuman, and hypocritical spirit in God's Church. The Temple and its furniture had become fetishes, more sacred than Jehovah's law; and to many, than Jehovah's self. Worship had become

punctilious ritual, and a price for the favour of God. Jehovah was appropriated to the uses of the Jew as if He had been a merely local "lares and penates," and not the God of the whole wide earth; and the Gentiles were scarcely accounted worthy of being respected as His creatures.

Page 294 - The Parousia a Universal Presence - Israel had therefore failed to serve the purpose of its Divine election. The only remedy for this fallen condition of the Church is the total abrogation of the dispensation, and the substitution of another that shall lay a mightier hand upon the heart and conscience of humanity. The age of local shrines and prescribed rituals must cease. Men must henceforth be compelled to face the truth that God is not limited to temples made with hands; that no priest-hood keeps the key of access; that *"neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem,"* and by no fastidious ritual, does God seek man to worship Him; but that He is an immanent *Presence* — a Spirit and a Father, who makes only this restriction upon man's power to worship, that it shall be *"in spirit and in truth."*

This more spiritual age was about to be ushered in. The clock had already struck — *"the hour cometh, and now is."* The Temple of Herod would go down; the Temple of Christ's Body would ascend through death into a Diviner state. Then, the centre of all worshipping eyes would be no temple built by hands, but the adorable *Parousia* or presence of an unseen but omniscient Christ, who could say: *"Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the age; but more intimately and abundantly when the cumbrous scaffolding of the present dispensation, to which, alas, you cling too much, shall have finally disappeared, and all your eyes and hearts be constrained to seek with deeper eagerness the consciousness of a Divinity in which you live and move, by which you are inspired to lofty faith and noble deeds; and, abiding in which, you are united to the spirits of just men made perfect, to innumerable hosts of angels, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."*

Page 295 - A Near or Distant Parousia ? - And so it seems that to realize the *Parousia* here is, like St. John, to *"know that the Son of God is HERE and that we are in Him. This is the true God and eternal life."* The age of the disciples knew God only as shut up in a sanctuary at Jerusalem; the following age was to dwell in God by the personal though **invisible PRESENCE** of Christ with every true believer. Such is the antithesis which lies at the heart of this great prophetic discourse. The Temple age, with its materialistic localizations, is about to disappear; the age is about to dawn when every true disciple can enter into the Holiest of all and stand perpetually in the *Parousia* of *"God in Christ."* Does it not appear evident, then, that *"the age about to come"* is indeed no other than this blessed Gospel age, in which we are favoured by a Presence which is with every two or three who are gathered together in Christ's Name ?

6. Let us now search the answer in detail that we may see whether it agrees most with a near or a distant **parousia**. It is as well to note, at the outset, that our Lord's express intention in answering these questions is to arm His disciples effectively against the errors and temptations peculiar to the times. We may, therefore, confidently hold that the instruction given runs upon the plainest lines, and that any serious mistake under which the questioners may lie will be speedily corrected. It is, surely, the very last occasion on which our Lord would speak, as Dean Mansel says, "**with the obscurity of prophetic language,**" or mingle, without sufficient definition, His disciples' personal experiences with other events lying thousands of years apart.

Page 296 - Signs of the End - No method could better lead them to confusion and serious mistake.

"Take heed," He says, **"ye will hear of many calling themselves Christs."** This prophecy was certainly strikingly realised in the Apostolic age, and especially before the fall of Jerusalem. There is even good reason for believing that the Emperor Nero was at one time prompted by the phantasy that he was the King of ancient prophecy who was to rule the world from Jerusalem. The probability that any future generation will be troubled by *many* Christs is very small indeed. Here and there some idiotic individual, moved by current prophetic teaching, may be seized by the fancy of calling himself "**Christ**," but those led astray will not be *many*.

In fact, the prophecy must be read of the first Christian generation. When our Lord says "**ye**" to men standing in His presence, He in no case means the "**ye**" to carry an indefinite or merely general reference to believers of some distant date. Certainly, the next sign cannot be thus postponed. **"Ye shall SOON hear of wars and rumours of wars."** This troubled state of society was to continue for some years, and was not "**the end**," but only the "**travail pangs**" of the coming Messianic age. The historians of the period fill their pages with "**cities sacked by the enemy or swallowed up by earthquakes**" throughout the Roman empire.

From the year 52, when a savage war broke out between the Galileans and Samaritans, there was no peace in Palestine until Jerusalem was levelled and her worship silenced. At this period the disciples are to suffer persecution as preachers of the Kingdom. **"Ye shall stand before Sanhedrims, and in synagogues shall ye be beaten"** (ver 9 with Mark 13.9).

Page 297 - Work to be Done before the End - This is a certain note of first century life, when Jerusalem still stands, and the evangelists are of Jewish blood. Indeed, the reference is mainly Palestinian in scope. Amid the calamities of this period, many in the church grow cold, and turn treacherously upon their friends. These evils are aggravated by the spread

of "**damnable heresies**" that might almost deceive the elect, (vv. 10 -12). This picture is exactly realised in the later epistles, and in the seven Asiatic churches of the Apocalypse. St. John recognizes "**the last time**" — the time just before the end — by the many servants of anti-Christ who had invaded the infant church — a veritable flood of waters from the Serpent's mouth.

"And these good tidings of the Kingdom shall be. preached in the. whole inhabitable world for a testimony unto all the nations and then shall the end come" At length there comes into our horizon what seems to be a sign that "**the end**" could not have been intended for the Apostolic days. It is argued that a generation was not sufficient for such a work, and that Luke must best represent the teaching of the Master when he reports that this season of evangelization is "**the times of the Gentiles,**" which in fairness must last as long at least as the Jewish seasons, which were for many centuries. Now this interpretation is simply ridiculous in view of the number of palpably erroneous notions it contains, although it is the product of a writer whose eyes are usually in his head. How can "**the end**" be at the conclusion of the evangelization of the Gentile world when the end is either coincident with or close upon "**the abomination of desolation**" standing in the temple and when the social and political troubles of the apostolic age were its birth-pang's, and when "**the end**" is the end of the then existing Jewish age ?

Page 298 - Gospel Preached before the End - The "**times of the Gentiles**" are certainly this current period of Gentile evangelization, but the evangelization referred to here is quite another thing. It is identical with that evangelization which our Lord orders for all the cities of Israel, and which will hardly be accomplished before His coming. The Gospel to be preached is "**the good news of the coming Kingdom.**" All the Israelitish locations or colonies throughout the world were to be visited and evangelized so that the Jews and Gentiles in those cities might hear for themselves that Jerusalem was to be destroyed, and Mosaic worship cease, as the sign that God had made Jesus Lord and Christ, and that all nations were henceforth to obey Him. This divine arrangement was a wise and kindly providence in the interest of both Jew and Gentile, and the fulfillment of this pre-intimated purpose must have been a valuable "**witness**" to the divine claims of Jesus. And this general evangelization of the civilized world need not have been misunderstood, because the Scriptures recognise it as an accomplished fact as early as the days of Paul. The faith of the Roman Church was then spoken of "**throughout the world.**" The Gospel was already come "**to all the world and preached to every creature**" (Col 1.6,23). No doubt, by the year 70, every considerable city of the world, where at least a Jewish colony had been planted, had been visited in order that the scattered brethren might be apprised of the

judgement impending over Jerusalem and its and be convinced upon its accomplishment that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

Page 299 - "Then Cometh the End" - St. Paul prided himself upon the fact that through him alone the Gospel had been fully proclaimed and heard of all the Gentiles (2 Tim 4.17). Why then should this evangelization in the Synoptics be so grossly misunderstood as to be taken to indicate a **"distant foreshadowed fulfillment"** (Alford) of the coming to another people in another age ? It is to the credit of Chrysostom that he seized upon the proper meaning of this verse, and saw that the Divine intention of it was to leave the Jews throughout the world **"without a shadow of excuse"** for unbelief. Would that his example had been more catching amongst his exegetical successors ! The fitness of the divine long suffering through such a testifying period of years agrees with what was due not only to the covenant people, but as well to all throughout the world who had put any faith in the divinity of Jerusalem's religion, or had any knowledge of Israel's God.

This work efficiently done by Christ's messengers — **"then cometh the end."** We claim that what immediately follows is our Lord's definition of **"the end."** Interpreters can hardly mistake the meaning of vv. 15-22. **"The abomination of desolation"** is in all probability the now notorious profanation of the Temple by Eleazer, and his crew, before the investment of the city by the Romans. The warning to flee from Judaea into the mountains, shows that this judgement day is to cover the length and breadth of the land; and its distinctively Jewish area is plainly indicated by the instruction not to let this danger overtake them on a Sabbath day when the gates of the cities would be shut and it would be impossible to procure the assistance of their neighbours, nor in the winter when the days are short and cold, and the roads impassable from the heavy rains.

Page 300 - "The Days of Vengeance" - These and other simple admonitions, with His kindly remembrance of mothers and mothers-about-to-be, speak volumes for the tenderness of Christ's heart, considering that at the moment He is sitting under the shadow of His Cross. Indeed, the unparalleled severities of this judgement harvest of the Holy Land seem to have painfully impressed our Lord. This catastrophe is without doubt to Him, however commentators may belittle it, **" the great and notable day of the Lord " — " the days of vengeance, that ALL THINGS which are written may be fulfilled "** (Luke 21.22.) The fiery judgements anticipated by the prophets are therefore here realized and exhausted. Let this be marked and well digested. Strongly as certain exegetes affirm a second fulfillment, and on a necessarily larger scale, as Christendom exceeds Judaea, more strongly does our Lord contradict their expectations, for such great tribulation has never been **" nor ever shall be "** again. So fierce,

indeed, will this Gehenna be, that without a Providential shortening of its duration no flesh shall be saved from its unquenchable furies. There is no need to array evidence of the terrific trials which befell the Abrahamic people in the concluding years of the Judaic age. So marvellously was this prophecy fulfilled that many of the freer critics of the Gospels have asserted that these books must have been written after the fall of Jerusalem, because prophecy never can anticipate history so realistically as it is said to have done here.

Page 301 - Pretended Christs - Besides the physical dangers to which the infant Church would be exposed in this bloody Armageddon, there was a still greater danger from the current expectation of the Jews that on any evil seriously threatening the national life and its religion, the Messiah would certainly appear and bring salvation. Nothing therefore was more natural than that in the feverish atmosphere of the nation's dying throes false Christs should be reported. Such would be Saviours might even attest their Messiahship by miracles, and almost succeed in deceiving the Church itself. Well, how does our Lord proceed to arm His Apostles against this immanent and destructive delusion ?

Will He not here speak out in plainest terms; or will He take shelter behind the custom of "*prophetic obscurity*" in which now-a-day exegetes believe so much ? Why, if ever our Lord can have felt a necessity for plain and explicit counsel, so as to leave no excuse for ignorance or loophole for blundering, it is now, when His very elect in the infancy of their faith are in danger. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that the common belief of to-day was the actual mind of Christ as He was addressing His disciples, what naturally would have been the form of instruction best fitted to secure the stability of the Apostolic Church? Good, kindly, Christian men, of great teaching power, and with a multitudinous following, are consumed with zeal for the idea that Christ Himself will visibly appear, next year or a little later, to destroy the wicked and rule over His saints on earth, — this or some kindred notion, for the idea is protean in its shapes. If our Lord had had as much as the faintest notion that He was to come personally only at the close of the Gospel age, two thousand years after the fall of Jerusalem, He could have secured the absolute safety of His elect with a single explicit word.

Page 302 - The Real Christ Invisible - It was only needful for Him to have said, "*My coming is not connected with the fall of Jerusalem; but lies far forward in the future.*" Nothing approaching to such words were spoken. While the disciples are to believe in the coming when Jerusalem is in its dying throes, they are not to believe that Christ is "*here*" or "*there*" — localized in some palatial chamber or in the retirement of the desert. Our Lord is far from denying that His Advent is appointed for this time.

The word that would have justified the notion now believed was never spoken, useful as it would have been to the blundering Church of these eighteen centuries. Instead of such advice, the disciples are warned that their defence against delusion lies in clearly understanding that there is never to be such a local and physical manifestation of the Christ on this earth. **"The world seeth Me no more."** A physical Christ, visible in Jerusalem or elsewhere, is strictly forbidden to Christian faith. Never is it to be said in history concerning Him or His kingdom (Luke 17.20):

Lo here! Lo there ! Our Lord abjures that questionable privilege of material localization which so many of His followers impute to His return. The notion is a survival from the rudimentary structures of the Judaic Messianic faith. To hold it in the Church is to encrust Christianity with a Judaic shell; to conceive Christ's glory under the very limitations which He is throwing off by His death and resurrection; it is to contradict the most vital and essential meaning of His **parousia** or **Presence**, which is really *absence* if it is not as universal as His Church, as ubiquitous as God Himself; and it is to turn back upon that very idea of a temple presence which Christ is dying to make obsolete.

Page 303 - His Presence not Local - Most plainly is this local personal idea of His return repudiated by Himself: ***"Never will it be true that I am to be seen here or there. My coming has a twofold aspect. It is an outbreak of new light that shall shine from the Blast to the West; and it is, as well, like to the gathering of eagles round the carcass to devour it. To the new world, it is a coming full of new illumination, a new sun arising on the world; to the old world, it is a coming to judge and to sweep corruption from the land."*** In other words, it is the official advent of the Christian age by the flashing forth of the brightness of Christ's glory on the world, the breaking of new light upon earth's darkness, fresh revelations of Christ's ascended reign, and a larger influx of Christ's Spirit to His Church; and it is as well, the close of the Judaic age by the judgement and destruction of the rotting carcass of a church which has ceased to have God's life in it, and is now only an encumbrance and pollution where it lies affronting Heaven.

Thus our Lord instructs us that His coming cannot take the personal and local form under which men so commonly, and, we might say, *naturally*, conceive it. He does not say, ***"I am not coming at this time, nor in your lifetime."*** That would clearly have put the disciples beyond all danger of delusion, and it would have given reasonable cover to the zeal of those who are looking for the Advent now. But He did not say it — could not: because His express intention was to tell His disciples that He would verily come while some of them had not tasted death, and that the signs of His Advent to supremest authority in heaven and on earth would be the destruction of Jerusalem as the abrogation of the former covenant, and

the increasing dominance of the Christian faith over the beliefs of men.

Page 304 - "After the Tribulation" - Again, history agrees with our interpretation. When the Lord of the Vineyard sent His armies into Judaea, the Christians recognized the signal for their flight, and only the spiritually dead were left behind. The Roman eagles spread over the land like a devouring plague, and never ceased their consuming work until the land was peeled, Jerusalem laid waste, and Jewish worship rendered void. The carcass was devoured; the eagles fattened on its unwholesome flesh. The land was finally judged for its sins because the cup of its iniquity was full.

Is the story of Jerusalem finished here, or are we transported into some more distant time ? Our Lord proceeds: *"But immediately after the tribulation of those days"* (ver 29). Here there is no break in time, but the closest succession; and if we read Luke's report, identity of time with the time of Jerusalem's tribulation. The passage is *"very difficult,"* says Mansel from its so intimate connection with Jerusalem, and its unmistakable reference to the Second Coming. Luckily, for such perplexed commentators, Luke supplies a remark about Jerusalem's tribulation at which they grasp with the proverbial despair of a drowning man. *"Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."* This is interpreted as covering all the period during which the Jewish race are dispossessed of the Holy Land; and Matthew's *"immediately"* therefore comes in after this age-long tribulation has passed away ! But what are we to think of a system of interpretation which makes one Evangelist contradict another ?

Page 305 - The Times of the Gentiles - Then, again, we may ask, What ends this supposed long period of tribulation ? And *"immediately after"* the end of the Jewish tribulation, is there to be such a convulsion of the physical universe as is here described; or, if understood spiritually, such an utter collapse of the Christian Church as Alford describes ? On the contrary, Paul tells us that the restoration of the Jews to Divine favour will add immensely to the fullness and glory of the Gentile (Rom 11.12). Altogether then the interpretation is out of joint. Meyer's view is, that Luke's statement refers to the short period during which the Roman trampling on Palestine is allowed to run. Better still, we think, is the idea that our Lord means here to say, *"The Gentiles shall tread down Jerusalem until an end is made of the Judaic Dispensation, and the age of the Gentiles is ushered in."* Such an age for the Gentiles had been foreshadowed in the Old Testament Scriptures. Our Lord had said, *"The kingdom shall be given to the Gentiles;"* and Paul accordingly was looking forward to a time, not far distant, when *"the fullness of the Gentiles should come in,"* i.e. when the Gentiles would have their full standing in the kingdom of God, by the official abrogation of the Jew's pre-eminence in the destruction of

Jerusalem. When Jerusalem's day would be completely gone, the Gentile's season would begin, and the Scripture be fulfilled. Thus does Luke's intimation finely resolve itself into an idea in complete harmony with our exegesis of the passage; and bring all three Evangelists into strict agreement as to the time and place of what is immediately to follow, according to Mark's words: "*In those days, after that tribulation.*"

Page 306 - The Powers of Heaven Shaken - Taking the narrative, then, as it reads, without intercalating long periods according to our fancy, this "*difficult*" passage becomes like simplicity itself. When Jerusalem has passed through this great tribulation, the people been broken and scattered, and worship made impossible, is there any mode of speech that will better describe Israel's unspeakable desolation and horror of great darkness than that old figure which the prophets had made familiar to every Jew — "*The sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give their light, the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens be shaken*"? This cannot be interpreted as an actual rupture of the sidereal system, as the earth is standing fast in its place, and men living and beholding in spite of the catastrophe. It is a prophetic quotation to be interpreted in its well-defined Biblical sense. The same language was used by Isaiah to describe Babylon's destruction by the Medes; by Ezekiel concerning Egypt's fall; by Joel and Amos of the tribulation of their days. Let the reader put himself in the place of the Jew immediately after the national collapse, and he will see that it is not too strong an Orientalism to describe the mental darkness, the stupefaction and the misery of a people whom God had judged, and who are forced to see every prospect blasted without hope. Such was Israel's outlook. The sun of Israel's day had set; and God's face was dark with indifference and silence. So dark was the nation's night that no single star of hope shone in their sky. Bitter as wormwood and gall was Israel's disappointment, and utterly lost its faith in God. And worse is yet to come.

Page 307 - Christ Coming in His Kingdom - There was no intelligent Jew in those days but knew that Christ's disciples had been foretelling far and wide this fall of the nation and its temple, and asserting that this doom was specially to be taken as a proof that Christ was indeed the Son of God, and had substituted His own mediatorship for the divine legation of Moses. When this dread event occurred, it was a magnificent triumph for the preachers of the Cross. The fall of Jerusalem brought in a spiritual rejuvenescence to the Gospel cause. As a matter of fact, Christ's star rose in proportion as the star of Moses set; doing for the Church what the Resurrection had done for the disciples. Thus, every eye observant of the signs of the times, saw "*the sign of the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.*" And the background of this coming was "*the clouds of heaven.*" Again we

are face to face with Oriental imagery. The *"clouds"* are poetry for gloom, for darkness, for threatening tribulation. Isaiah says: *"The Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh unto Egypt."* Later, Daniel prophecies of the Son of Man under a similar figure. So the coming of Christ in His kingdom was seen over against the darkness of the Jewish day, the cloudy prospects of Israel's personal and national life. He came to His dispensational day through the dank and portentous darkness of the heavens — as every new day rises to its strength, breaking through the heavy curtains of the night. Salvation is seen only through the clouds of judgement. Calvary shines brightest against Sinai's dark and thunderous gloom. If Judaism had not been turned to darkness, the Apostles could not have triumphantly asserted that Christ was on the Father's throne, and that all the kingdoms of this world were given into His hand.

Page 308 - Gathering in the Elect - But with Jewish hopelessness ever growing darker, and the Church of Christ achieving year by year its destined supremacy over every faith, surely it was demonstrated to all eyes that Christ was coming in His kingdom, endowed with the power and glory of the Father. That this is the gist of our Lord's meaning is witnessed by His remark to the priests and elders at His trial: *"From now, ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."* How else, we ask, than in the growing spiritual power of Christ and the growing darkness of the Judaic sky? Yes, this was one of the bitterest elements in Israel's cup. The logic of events did seem to chide them with their blindness and stupidity. It looked then as if it were possible that they had embroiled their hands in Messiah's blood. The brighter were the prospects of the Crucified, the more bitterly did *"all the tribes of the land"* lament over what presaged to be the final extinction of Israel's hope. All this, again, was the fulfillment of the prophecy describing the Babylonian desolation of the Sand: *"For this shall the land mourn, and the heavens above be black"* (Jer 4.28).

The statement that *"Christ shall send forth His angels with the sound of a trumpet to gather His elect,"* would have lost much of its perplexity if *"angels"* had been displaced by *"messengers."* There is no better suggestion than that of Rabbi Light foot: *Ministros suos cum tuba evangelica.* The verse is founded upon Isa 27.13: *"A great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish . . . and shall worship the Lord."* Our Lord delighted to point to Himself as the fulfiller of all the prophecies of the ancient Word.

Page 309 - All fulfilled in that Generation - At this stage, when the covenant people are exhibited as broken and scattered, what more appropriate than to show that Christ's mission is a healing one, and that He gathers *"a people for God's Name,"* builds up another elect nation out of

every blood and tongue, to dwell in the New Jerusalem which comes down from heaven ? Here we see the kingdom growing around the Person of the ever-present Christ, and promising to fill the earth. It is the dramatic expression of the truth: *"There shall be one Fold and one Shepherd," "One Lord, one Baptism, and one leather of all,"* with one centre and home for the human race. Indeed, we might have limited our comment to this selection from the prayer in the *Didactic*: *"Let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom."*

The verses which here follow are simply an emphatic assurance that the disciples will see these things accomplished within the generation. The historical occurrences around Jerusalem are to be the signal that *"He is nigh"* — not, of course, in His visible personality, as is shown by Luke's substitution of *"the kingdom of God"* for Christ's Person. The approximate date is fixed by the term "generation." No manipulation can make *"generation"* mean other than the lifetime of those then living; nor all these things" less than the totality of the events before described. So certain is Christ of the nearness of His age, that He affirms that His promise is more stable than the foundations of heaven and earth; and yet, with excessive frankness, He confesses apparent limitations to His knowledge. He knows not *"the day nor the hour,"* nor even the season of the year. Here again excuse is reading a double meaning into our Lord's discourse.

Page 310 - Our Lord's Ignorance of the Day and Hour - An able writer already quoted, says — *"The two declarations All will happen in this generation," 'No one knows the time,'* are irreconcilable taken as referring to the same event." The ignorance professed must therefore concern *"another day, separated from the former by an unknown indefinite interval."* **We are curious to know by what rule of logic it can be established that if one is certain of an event occurring within forty years, he must be ready to predict the very day and hour.** Such a dictum is belied by all experience. If our Lord was, while in human form, commonly subject to our limitations of prevision, then He might from His own sagacity, or very well from the prophetic writings, forecast the general date of the end of the dispensation, while confessing that minute exactitude of knowledge, dependent on so many contingencies, was possible only to the Infinite, and not needful for His disciples. Our Lord's reserve, however, may not be so much due to any invincibility of ignorance as to a certain natural impossibility of reducing the events described to the precise dimensions of a day or hour.

A definite prophecy of the day and the hour, if He could have given it, would almost certainly have been discredited by many witnesses, even after the event. Narrators are all at variance as to the hour of the day when the battle of Waterloo began. How could men have agreed as to the

hour of the coming of that Kingdom. which Christ said was "*among you,*" and yet was "*about to come,*" and to be seen from the date of His Crucifixion, and yet not till after the abrogation of the Mosaic kingdom of God ? Had our Lord's coming been a purely personal and local manifestation, the moment might have been foretold.

Page 311 - One Taken, Another Left - But it was to be like the advent of the summer; and could man or angel fix the hour when summer dawns? It was to be like light breaking in the rosy East: and who but God can tell the moment when dawn changes into day? Mechanical arrangements can be measured by the clock; God's great evolutionary processes cannot be fixed to the human eye by smaller measurements than generations. No wonder that Christ said, "*I cannot fix the day and hour for you.*" By that very reticence, or ignorance if you will, He shows that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation," and will scarcely be discerned by the multitude until it is firmly rooted in the earth.

The same spiritual character is given to His coming in the warnings which conclude this chapter. The Old Testament Kingdom was a geographical quantity; a family and tribal dispensation. Not so the kingdom about to come. It is to be spiritual, and thus elective, discriminating. Of two neighbours, one will be carcase for the eagles, the other elect to the kingdom. It will be of no use to say then, "*We have Abraham to father.*" One of the *same* family shall be taken, the other left. The two are severed in their destinies, because severed in their spirits. One hears the trumpet call — responds, and enters into life; the other stays in old beliefs and sins, and becomes food for the eagles or fuel for Gehenna. Destinies are settled by affinities. God treats us as He finds us — tares or wheat, sensual or spiritual, obedient or contentious: these are the secrets of men's destinies.

Here ends our task with chap. 24. It is not probable that we have satisfied all readers. But let the dissatisfied remember what a labyrinth of confusion the chapter becomes in the hands of most interpreters, and how unsatisfactory their expositions have been to multitudes of our ablest Biblical scholars.

Page 312 - What current Interpretations lead to - We could readily fill a page with eminent names whose ultimate verdict is summed up in one or other of two propositions, which we cull from a recent work by a well known English critic:—

1. Either Jesus was mistaken, because He did not come as is foretold; or,
2. The Evangelists are inaccurate reporters. And they seem so, for "*neither question gets a plain response, and both are partially evaded. The*

parts comprising the answer are without proper connection, and have no perceptible progress."

Certainly our current expositions justify the charges made. Every expositor of the double reference theory more or less explicitly acknowledges the same. Even our unconvinced reader will admit that the exposition given in these pages is the refutation of such charges, by the comparative readiness with which the discourse resolves itself into an intelligent and relevant answer;

the close, consecutive order of its thinking; and the fidelity of the meaning obtained to the most natural sense that can possibly be put upon the words. We boldly make the claim that, when properly expounded, the chapter leaves no room for the accusation, either that Jesus was mistaken, or that His answer was misrepresented by the Evangelists.

One word of caution in conclusion. Let us not imagine that this discourse, including chap 25., was intended to cover all aspects of the Second Advent. It is simply a clear, orderly, and instructive response to the disciples' questions, meeting their immediate demands with frank explicitness.

Page 313 - The Parable of the Virgins - It professes to be no more than an answer to the *When ?* and *What is the sign ?* of the earthward and temporal aspect of the advent of Christ's age or dispensation; and only by its profession can it be fairly judged.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins has been found difficult to expound by all who have sought for more in it than the one direct and much-needed lesson which our Lord was endeavouring to impress on His disciples — the need of being prepared for delay in the advent of the Kingdom beyond the moment at which it would be commonly expected. It is not taught that the Advent will be delayed indefinitely, but simply that as some like the Tyrannical Servant will find it come sooner than it is looked for, many in the church who are eagerly wishing for it, will find it delayed longer than they expected.

The parable does not carry us beyond death, nor make any direct reference to eternal destinies. The time is not in the distant future, but ***"immediately after the tribulation of those days."*** The marriage is the conscious and historical recognition by the Church, that her day of grace, her dispensational reign on earth, has come; that she is indeed the Bride of Him who sits upon the throne, and is spiritually and corporeally united in her life and destiny with her Glorified Head; or, to put it in more official language, it is the formal initiation of the reign of Christ on earth, the introduction of the Gospel Age or Dispensation. Interpreted on these lines,

we remain true to the time, the place, and the methods of the Kingdom's coming, as expressed in other Scriptures, and find the parable unfold its beautiful meaning without hitch or strain, and to be rich in practical teaching for all time.

Page 314 - Expectant but Slumbering - The Church and her friends are represented here as in hourly expectation of the *Parousia* or discernible conjunction of the Church with her Divine Lord. Yet the time drag's heavily on; the very eagerness of expectation makes the hours seem longer than they are. In their protracted vigils the friends of the Bride grow weary, and at length their heads droop on their breasts, and they drift into a troubled sleep which is broken only when certain startling signs are in the air that the hour of hope has come. Every reader must admit that this is a speaking- picture of the Apostolic Church. The time is *"midnight" — "The night is far spent, the day is at hand !"* Every one is here patiently waiting for the Bridegroom's arrival. Is not that the repeatedly expressed expectation of every Epistle, and the attitude of every New Testament Church ? The Bridegroom's coming is unduly delayed. Did it not appear so to the Thessalonians, and those who upbraided Peter with the long delay ? Was not "patience" an oft-commended virtue to those who waited for the coming? Whatever the bride may be, her friends are slumbering drowsily. Did not the Apostles chide the congregations of their day because they were not half alert ? *"It is high time to awake out of sleep." "Let us not sleep as do others, but watch."*

When at length the clock has struck, it is found that one-half of the watchers are without oil in their cruises and their lights going out. Do we not find that on the eve of the *Parousia*, one half at least of the seven Apocalyptic Churches are needing, like Sardis, *"to strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die "* — the eye of faith dim and needing eye salve that it may see, and the lamp of love going out in a careless and indulgent temperament that has taken too kindly to the pleasures of the world, and that compels Christ to threaten a portion of His followers that they will be treated like His foes ?

Page 315 - Missing the Marriage Joys - The immediate result of this difference in the preparation of the heart is a total severance of experience between one professor and another. The Bride recognizes that the fullness of her privilege has come. The really godly portion of the Apostolic generation shared so fully in *"the unction of the Holy Ghost,"* that it beheld the sign of the Son of Man in the darkened clouds of heaven, and knew that the day of His power had come. When the smoke of Jerusalem's judgement cleared away, all interested saw the Church gathered around the Christ, worshipping Him as seated on God's throne, and as having won a triumphant victory over the evil powers that had crucified Him. The

Church became more conscious of her own divinity, beheld herself more distinctly clothed with her Husband's graces, and felt herself much more a partaker of His heavenly life and destiny. Now she has come forth from the obscurity of her virgin days; she is no longer confounded with the beggared Jew, but is seen to pass into the palace splendours of her union with the King of kings. Realizing the grand significance other relation to the Eternal One, she knows that the time has come for Zion to put on her beautiful apparel and shine with the light and glory of the Bride of God.

The Virgins are those whom the Apocalypse speaks of as bidden to the marriage supper.

Page 316 - The Parable of the Talents - The wise are the happy witnesses of the Church's glory. Their experience is quickened by what their eyes behold; and they enter in to the more secret joys of their Lord — or, indeed, become an integrant portion of the Bride. Those left outside are those less spiritual friends of the Church, who had not eyes to see the *Parousia* for themselves, and are consequently self-excluded from the festive joys of the Church's conscious triumph, and more innerly communion with the Spirit of Christ. They are not shut out of the kingdom so much as excluded from the triumphant joy of being consciously in fellowship with the ever-present Christ, the Husband of the soul. The parable thus recognizes the serious danger of being disappointed at the epoch of the expected *Parousia*. Not realizing the *Lord's presence* as they anticipated many of the less spiritual, in their disappointment, would experience a positive reaction in their faith, and perhaps drift out permanently into the outer darkness of unbelief and apostasy. The midnight might be permanent. There are opportunities which do not readily return.

The Parable of the Talents, like that of the Virgins, is barren of any particular notes of time or place that will throw light upon its interpretation. We are not told whether the scene is laid in spirit-life or here; and commentators wisely make little of its eschatology. Whitby thinks that the parable refers to the Jewish people. In this case, it probably expounds *the law of entrance* on the Kingdom. Our Lord certainly did often warn the Jews that their final relation to the kingdom would be determined by the use which they made of the truth revealed to them by Moses and the Prophets.

Page 317 - The Parousia not Postponed - Faithful use of the oracles of God would fit them to pass in into the newer and purer light of the Kingdom, whereas abuse of their dispensational gifts would have a totally different issue — the loss of their distinctive privileges and rejection into the outer darkness of disappointment and despair.

It is possible, however, that our Lord was narrowing His thoughts to His own disciples, and unfolding the principle on which *the honours* of His Kingdom would be dispensed. Perhaps He was answering that recent disputation: "**Who shall be greatest ?**" without recalling painful memories. They should be most honoured who dealt most faithfully with the evangelical truths committed to their care. The parable is applied concretely in our Lord's Epistles to the Apocalyptic Churches when the dispensational crisis of His coming is at hand. The faithless and slothful are to be blotted out of the Book of Life, while the loving and diligent servant is to be made a pillar in the Temple of God, and, it may be, allowed to enter so far into "**the joy of his Lord**" as to "**sit down with Him on His Throne.**" Against a speedy return of Christ (and also against the early existence of this Gospel) much is made of the remark — "**Now, after a long time.**" But a generation, or forty years, the actual distance of the *Parousia*, is an unusually long time for an individual to hold wealth in trust for a master; and therefore the parable does not postpone the **Parousia** or show that the disciples were beginning to despair of their Lord's return when this Gospel was written. As to whether the reward is a temporal experience, or is limited to the eternal world, the parable doth not say.

Page 318 - The Sheep and the Goats - There is, however, a common feeling among expositors that there is a present world fulfillment, even while their sympathies are with a "**last day**" interpretation. We humbly suggest that our Lord is thinking here only of the broad determining principles by which men enter on, or are excluded from, the supreme rewards of the kingdom of God — consequently, that the parable applies equally to the life beyond and the kingdom here. Indeed, the veil between the temporal and eternal was so thin to Christ that He never thought of His kingdom as divided. There is but one Church and one reward. They who do not enter are in the outer darkness whether here or there.

The powerful representation of the Sheep and Goats, with which chapter 25 finishes, is neither a parable nor the realistic picture of a formal judgement which transpires in place and time. It is a highly dramatic setting of some function of judging and separation which Christ fulfils in the destinies of nations and of men: but it is difficult to disintegrate the hard stern facts; and consultation of our front-rank expositors rather adds to the perplexity. It is a common mistake to assume that this representation is an official and concrete judgement, taking place at the end of the Gospel Dispensation. Lange entitles it, "**The Final Judgement in its Last Form.**" This takes too much for granted. It is a remarkable fact that the Scriptures know nothing of a *last* or final judgement of the world. Immediately an expositor is dominated by the idea that any particular judgement is the last historically, he is on very slippery ground, since

every judgement whose time is located in the Scriptures is described as *"about to come to pass ;"* and not one as *" final,"* although its results may be final so far as concerns the fate of individuals.

Page 319 - Not the " Last Judgement." - Take the coming of the Son of Man before us, and it is undeniably the same as that in Matt 24.30,31; and it was promised to that generation, and before some of the disciples should taste of death. If this be so, imagine the distortion of prophetic outlook which takes place when this judgement is wrenched from its true historic setting, and transported forward to the end of time, and there left suspended in the air without a single note as to the world's fate beyond that point ! In view, then, of the demands of faithful exegesis, this judgement scene must take its beginning in the period immediately succeeding the downfall of Jerusalem. There is no hiatus in our lord's discourse, no historical sketch of the progress and consummation of the Messianic Kingdom, to justify us in postponing the contents of this scene to any distant day. Following **Bishop Westcott**, we feel constrained to say: *"Christ came in the lifetime of St. John. He founded His immovable Kingdom. He gathered before Him the nations of the earth, old and new, and passed sentence upon them. He judged in that shaking of earth and heaven, most truly and decidedly the living and the dead. He established fresh foundations for society and a fresh standard of worth."* * [" The Historic Faith," p. 90.]

Another bad mistake is made when local and temporal ideas are made emphatic. Place and time are left so indefinite, that if, with Dr. Martineau, in his *Seat of Authority*, we insert into the transaction an actual throne planted on the grass, and the people dragged from their cities and lands to stand in a sweltering mass before a judge upon a certain day, then we utterly misconceive the theological meaning of the picture, and make it, in fact, ridiculous.

Page 320 - Represents a Continuous Process - The whole pictorial element is mere dramatic setting, and is present because needful for the disciples' education, as it is for all eastern and uncultured peoples to this day. Scientific students of the Scriptures should be able to transcend the spectacular form in which truth is cast, and instinctively discern the essential meaning apart from its ornate covering. Here, then, as instructed, we are at the entrance of the Christian age. The Son of Man is in authority, so far above principalities and powers that even the angels are His servants in the administration of His Kingdom. As it was anciently the most common function of the king to judge his people, so it is the permanent and continuous function of Christ, the Son of Man and **"King"** of men. This work proceeds in no merely local court, with any visible congress of dead or living men. Its area is the world. All nations are

gathered, as it were, before His throne. God now dwells with men. The Jew is no longer the only *"people of His presence."* The times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. The Son of Man upon the throne initiates the new age of humanity, the age of solidarity in saving privilege, and all the nations are invited to repent. In Apocalyptic language: *"An angel is flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal Gospel to preach unto every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people."* The Apostles are busily fulfilling the command: *"Make disciples of all nations."* The result tells speedily both upon the characters and the destinies of men. Preaching Christ is the shepherding of men into sheep and goats; it is the severance of destinies into life eternal or condemnation.

Page 321 - Not a Judgement of the Dead - The Kingdom of God is not an indiscriminate universalism. Wherever it comes, it tests and severs by the fact of accepted or rejected truth, and the wheat goes to the garner and the chaff to unquenchable fire. Thus, this judgement is no one day's work, or the mere hasty summation of an exhausted age. Nor is there any place here for the mediaeval hymn writer's

**Tuba mirum spargens sonum
Per sepulchra regionum.**

There is no word here of dead souls; but of living men on earth who have made their choice between the Kingdom and Gehenna. Hence there is no express terminus to the judgement scene, no visible beyond of world-history. This judgement is a never-ending process, a daily settling of men's destinies according to an *"everlasting"* Gospel and in a Kingdom which has no end.

From this view point we can be fairly certain of the law or principle of the judgement. We may at once dismiss the idea that men's destinies are determined by their acts of hospitality to men as men, or that merely natural humanity can be *the* condition of salvation; Loath as we are to say a word in depreciation of charitable deeds, or to make light of the spiritual value of pitying love, we are compelled to see that personal and national destinies alike are settled not by this but, by the entertainment or rejection of *"the brethren"* of the King. These are a distinctively outstanding class, whose treatment by the sheep and goats is the determining element in the destinies of both. Look at the earthly experiences of these *"brethren"* — sick and in prison, naked and hungry, strangers in the land of their sojourn — do we know any class of Christian men whom that describes ?

Page 322 - The Principle of the Judgement - Certainly it pictures Christ's Evangelists in the ancient days, especially when they passed into lands inhospitable to *"the truth as it is in Jesus."* Let the dubious reader turn to Matt 10., and notice how the disciples are sent out to evangelize

and made dependent for their entertainment on the welcome accorded to their message, and how their rejection or reception is to seal for judgement or for the righteous man's reward, because to receive or to reject the evangelist is essentially to receive or to reject the Lord Himself — and all doubt will be at rest. The law of judgement, then, is really a synthesis of Wendt's contradictory findings on the meaning of our passage — the attitude of individuals to Christ and His Gospel (II. p. 285), and their practical treatment of His disciples apart from belief in Christ (p. 349 The Teaching of Jesus). The disciples as preachers, represent their Lord; their hospitable entertainment in their necessity is practical recognition of their mission and acceptance of their truth; whatever is done to them is done to Christ. An old Messianic prophecy runs thus: ***"The nation that shall not serve Thee will perish."*** This scene is Christ's claim to be the Person of that prophecy, and how true His word has proved the history of the nations can testify. Only eternity can show how true it is of individuals. Severe attacks have recently been made upon the veracity of the Gospel narratives, on the ground that the Apocalyptic judgements of the Synoptics are out of harmony with the spiritual self-executing judgement recorded by St. John.

Page 323 - A self-executing Judgement - Christ says in the latter, of the unbelieving man: ***" I judge him not: the word that I spake the same shall judge him in the last day."*** But does not the interpretation for which we plead show that the two judgements are essentially the same ? These goats judge and condemn themselves by their attitude to the word of Christ. In Matthew our Lord speaks with dramatic eloquence and prophetic fire; in the quieter narrative of John the self-same truth is spoken by a divine philosopher. Dr. Martineau says, concerning our Lord's great discourse: ***"Had the things announced happened when, and as they are described, they would have borne Him a witness worth preserving. But since the generation vanished, and all these things did not come to pass, surely there need be no regret in letting these Apocalyptic leaves drop from the blighted tree of Israel's national life, and lie upon the devastated soil of Palestine."***

We claim, however, that the Messianic teachings of the New Testament are simple and harmonious — that the prophetic utterances attributed to our Lord are faithfully reported, and have been identically realized in history, so far as this world is the field of their fulfillment. However damaging the indictment drawn up against the Gospels on the basis of the traditional interpretation, we dare assert that if this more spiritual and homogeneous interpretation of Christ's prophetic teachings can be substantiated, it will henceforth be impossible to impeach the veracity of the Gospels' witness to the Person and work of Christ. With His fulfillment of the Messianic ideal of the Scriptures all stands or falls.

ST. JAMES AND ST. JUDE

Page 324 - HAVING considered at length our Lord's own made upon certain, of His disciples in so far as it finds expression in their epistles to the Churches. The accuracy of our interpretation of the Master can be put to a very severe, almost infallible test, by strict comparison with the teaching of those Apostles who have left us instruction on the question. Five of them, and the anonymous author of the Hebrews (equal to, if not, an Apostle), have with more or less explicitness expressed themselves on various aspects of the subject; and it will be a marvel if, with the most versatile ingenuity, we can show that the strictest agreement exists between them all, if in any serious degree we have misunderstood our Lord.

St. John's brief epistles we have already glanced at and have found the harmony complete. Saints James and Jude, as brothers of our Lord, must naturally interest us; and with no little eagerness should we consult their pages to see what form the primitive belief assumed within their minds. St. James wrote his epistle between 60 and 62 A.D., and it is believed was stoned to death by the Sadducees of Jerusalem soon after, because of his faith in the Messiaship of Jesus. Eusebius has preserved an independent testimony to James's doctrine in his narrative of his death.

Page 325 - St. James' Testimony - The Scribes and Pharisees in Jerusalem asked him a question concerning Christ. He answered, *"Why do ye ask me respecting Jesus, the Son of Man ? He is now sitting in the heavens, on the right hand of great power, and is about to come on the clouds of heaven."* (B.11. c.23). The epistle so well known to us is quite pronounced for the same view of the second coming. It was Written because the author was deeply grieved over a very visible decline in the faith and practice of the Jewish Christians scattered abroad. Many of them appear to have become impatient, under the unsettled condition of society, on account of the long delay in the coining of Christ, (1.3,4).

The state of things existing in the Church is precisely that foretold in Matt 24. The love of many has waxed cold, the spirit of social caste has entered as a dividing wall, and discordant teaching abounds. St. James prescribes diverse remedies for these evils, but his chief hope manifestly lies in the speedy coining of the second Advent.

To the subject he devotes eleven consecutive verses of chapter 5. The rich especially are threatened with coming misery. Their wealth has been unjustly gotten, and they have stored it up in vain as *"the last days"* are upon them. Their crimes have at last entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath, and they shall drink of the cup to the full. Now, this *"day of*

slaughter" (5.5) for these wealthy and wanton Jews is beyond all doubt that deluge of calamity which fell upon the race wherever it was settled, and which had its culmination in the destruction of Jerusalem and the permanent desolation of the Jewish Fatherland.

Page 326 - The Testimony of St. Jude - This national Gehenna is stated to be the judicial infliction of Israel's rejected King. Accordingly, it is immanent for St. James. He asks his brethren to be *"patient until the parousia of the Lord"* (ver. 7); he says *"the parousia of the Lord is at hand"* (8); *"the judge standeth before the doors"* (9); and the moral is therefore again, *"Be patient."* Thus does our author beyond all question identify the Jewish judgement day of the Apostolic age with our Lord's *parousia*. His epistle is a brief but most explicit comment on our Lord's great prophecy, and justifies the interpretation we have given. He evidently knew nothing of a distant fulfillment of Christ's promise, nor was troubled by any hesitancy as to whether the judgement of Jerusalem and the Jewish race was also the *parousia*, the advent of Christ's age, and a happier era for His Church. If St. James was right, what grounds have we for asserting that up to the close of the nineteenth century the *parousia* has not occurred ?

St. Jude, another brother of our Lord, ought to be a competent witness of the accepted doctrine in Apostolic times. The epistle which bears his name is rather indefinite on many points of interest to us; but the doctrine of an impending Advent is there beyond all dispute. The writer's standpoint is from about A.D. 62 and forward a few years. Jerusalem does not seem to have fallen, but we have references to the political turbulence, the sensual immorality, and swarming spiritualistic speculations which invaded the Church just before that crisis.

We note the existence of the Balaamite and Nicolaitan vices mentioned in the addresses to the Apocalyptic churches. In this decadent faith and life, Jude sees the fulfillment of a prophecy of St. Paul, concerning *"the mockers of the last time."*

Page 327 - The Eve of the Parousia - That day has arrived, the servants of Satan are at their sinister employment, and against them he quotes a prophecy from the Jewish book of Enoch — *"Behold, the Lord came with ten thousand of His holy ones to execute judgement;"* while of his faithful brethren he says that they *"look for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ."* That this impending judgement is of an external and catastrophic nature is evident from his exemplary instances. We cannot therefore doubt that the pen of Jude is occupied with the same dispensational crisis as we have in the Gospels and the Apocalypse; nor can we hesitate to add him to the list of witnesses who testify to a then impending and now past *parousia*.

ST. PETER

Page 328 - THE Acts of the Apostles enable us to form a fairly complete conception of St. Peter's views. of the second Advent immediately after our Lord's ascension. On the day of Pentecost we find that he takes the miraculous gift of the Spirit to be the fulfillment of the Divine promise given by Joel: *"It shall come to pass in the last days that I will pour forth My Spirit."* This clearly indicates that the Apostle does not think of. himself as having entered. upon a new age, but as still in the old age of the prophets. We cannot suppose that the phrase *"the last days"* applies in any sense to the Christian age, as if it were the last age of the world.

The word *"days"* shows the period to be strictly limited and short lived; and the connection teaches us that from this beginning of last days there continues a period of intense miraculous manifestation which culminates in the sun being turned to blackness and the moon to blood, as preliminary accompaniments of *"that great and notable day of the Lord"* which is Israel's *last* because its judgement day, the extinction of its light and life. The point of interest here is that Peter recognised himself as living in *"the last days"* of the Old Testament age, and immediately in front of a terrific judgement for his people, which would be a manifestation of Christ's Messianic glory.

Page 329 - St. Peter's Speeches - Doubtless he was guided to this conclusion, not only by the enlightenment of the Spirit, but by his Lord's distinct assurance that *"the end of the age"* was approaching, and would be finished within a generation, with a judgement of the living and the dead, and the resurrection of the just. Accordingly, we find his addresses and letters full of that tone of distressed earnestness and apprehension which so dreadful an expectation must beget in the heart of one who knows that he will have to enter on its terrors, even when he believes that for himself it will end in eternal gain.

Again, we are with Peter in Solomon's porch. He addresses a rousing appeal to the people to repent and be converted, with the assurance that the condemning element in the impending coming will be changed into abundant showers of blessing (Acts 3.19). Then he affirms distinctly that, whether they repent or not, a new dispensation is on the wing, whose special feature is to be that it is *"a restitution of all things which God has spoken by His prophets since the age began."*

A little further on he states that the utterances of ALL the prophets concern *"THESE DAYS,"* and that they ought to remember the covenant God made with their fathers, saying unto Abraham, *"In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."*

What does the Apostle mean by this restitution "? Meyer *in loco* limits the idea to "**a restoration of all moral relations to their original normal condition,**" amongst the covenant people. This suits the "**restitution**" demanded by John the Baptist, and effected upon many (see our Lord's interpretation, Matt 17.11); but is too narrow for the larger vision of the Christian Apostle. It is evident that Peter conceived of this "**restitution,**" as a complete theological upheaval, involving a return to the more vital and liberal faith of their illustrious progenitor, in whose seed, that is Christ, all nations were to be blessed.

Page 330 - The Restitution of All Things - This change is all contained in the abrogation of the Mosaic covenant and the bringing in of the fullness of Gentile privilege in Christ's kingdom. Of course, commentators in large numbers, carried off by their imagination, have gone astray over this "**restitution of all things,**" and have conjured up dreams of an ideal paradisaical world, which we venture to think can never by any possibility be realized on earth. [?? PB] They overlook the fact that Peter distinctly limits this restitution to the fulfillment of Old Testament Messianic prophecy, and that our Lord has already given us a substantial taste of its meaning in telling us that John the Baptist "**restored all things**" in his preaching, by calling the people from their sham ritualistic sanctities to faith and repentance toward God, and plain honest dealing with their fellow men.

Yet those Utopian dreams might have been lawful had they been kept as ideals to be spiritually realized. Christ takes us back beyond Moses to the grand fundamentals and sweet simplicities of the early days when men lived near to God without the help of priest or temple. He makes all men kin, casts down every wall of partition, raises woman to her pristine dignity, makes an end of sin and brings in everlasting righteousness, reconciles God to man, abolishes the curse of death, removes the naming sword that guards the gate of paradise, and opens the Holiest of All to men; and on the Divine side of things puts down all rule and authority and power, and restores the kingdom to the Father. This ideal restitution is depicted in concrete form in the New Jerusalem of the Apocalypse, the ideal Christian state, tasted in this world, perfectly realised in God's hereafter.

Page 331 - St. Peter's Epistles - A student of St. Peter's epistles is struck with the constant presentation of Christianity as the fulfillment of Old Testament ideals — "**the restitution of all things.**" The Church is richly clothed in Israelitish garments, and all the Apostle's prophetic ideas are moulded in the forms in which the Old Testament prophets conceived the future. A quarter of a century after Pentecost, no change of view can be detected, beyond the hurry and passionate earnestness of one who feels

that the anticipated crisis is at hand. He still believes that the age is near its end. Christ was manifest **"at the end of the times for you"** (1 Pet 1.20). He says, **"The time is come that judgement must begin"; "Christ is ready to judge the quick and the dead"; "the end of all things is at hand."** Meanwhile the Church is **"expecting and hastening unto"** this day of terrific judgement, **"sober and watchful unto prayer."** But, as in this time of fiery trial some of them will taste of death (by reason of the Neronian persecutions ?), they are exhorted to fix their hopes especially upon the heavenly prize. Indeed, the dead in Christ will be more fortunate than the living. At this critical epoch Christ will reveal Himself in His glory to His saints, His descent to judge the dead is to His own only the fulfillment of His promise, **"I will come unto you to take you to Myself, that you may behold My glory."** Thus, **"the appearing of Christ"** in His glorified nature issues in their **"praise and glory,"** because as God **"gave Him glory"** in exalting Him to Heaven, so Christ will share that glory with His people.

Page 332 - "The Glory About to be Revealed." - The Apostle, it should be observed, never once refers by name to the resurrection of the dead. With him the essential idea in that event is not bodily reinvestment, but the translation of the saved dead from Hades to Heaven when the Lord, at the initiation of His sovereign dispensation, appears to show that He is the Lord of death by their deliverance. The inheritance of the risen saint is no millennial reign in earthly splendours: **"it is incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven, READY TO BE REVEALED IN THE LAST TIME "** (1 Pet 1.4,5). In the strength of this delightful hope of immediate glorification, Peter looks complacently upon the prospect of suffering like his Master, certain that he is **"a partaker of THE GLORY ABOUT TO BE REVEALED"** (1 Pet 5.1)

HOW did he reach this unbounded confidence in his speedy meeting with his glorified Redeemer? Surely, as we have pointed out, by the very plain and frequently repeated assurances of Christ Himself. Could he believe anything else who remembered the comforting words spoken more than once during the last few days on earth: **"A little while, and ye shall see Me"** — *opsesthe*, with spirit and not carnal eyes — **"to dwell with Me in My permundane glory"** ? Great emphasis does Peter put upon the heavenly character of his speedily approaching destiny — **"God hath called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus."**

It may be asked, was not this epistle written too late to be applied to the downfall of the Mosaic dispensation? The date is written on its forehead in the sentence — **" The time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God."** This can refer only to the judgement of the covenant people. There is no validity in the argument that the epistle was written between AD. 70 and 75. because not until Vespasian became emperor were

Christians persecuted for the name.* [Ramsay's "The Church in the Roman Empire," pp. 242, 281]

Page 333 - The Second Epistle, of St. Peter - That may or may not be a fact in Roman law. We must remember, however, that if Christians were prosecuted on the false pretext of being thieves and murderers, or because of absence from the national festivals, it was most natural for them to speak to one another of this as persecution for Christ's name sake. They knew well that hatred of Christianity was the moving spring of all their annoyances, inflicted by either magistrates or neighbours, and this epistle does no more than give full expression to this feeling. We cannot allow that the casual phrase "suffer as a Christian" could not be applied by Christians to persecutions inflicted under Nero, ignorant as we are of the precise attitude of the Roman law, and in face of overwhelming evidence that this epistle preceded the judgement day of Jerusalem.

Even the second epistle bears the marks of having been written earlier than the fall of Jerusalem, and probably, as Weiss thinks, in the latter days of Nero's reign. Coming to the second chapter, we find the Church in the state of disorder and decline prophesied by our Lord. In chapter 3., we have "*the last day scoffs* " as foretold by Paul. Faithful Christians are taunted with the query — "*Where is the promise of His coming ?* " It seems that the *parousia* had been expected earlier, and that many had grown sceptical. This disappointment was also foretold by Christ. Now, what is the Apostle's answer ? He replies — "*One day is with the Lord as a thousand years.*"

Page 334 - The Parousia not Postponed - It has become the fashion to find here the indication that Peter is beginning to feel that the *parousia* is "*indefinitely postponed.*" "*Shortly*" in prophetic usage may therefore mean thousands of years ! On the same principle, seeing that "*a thousand years are as one day,*" a "*long delay*" in prophetic language may be intended for only the fraction of an hour ! All this fooling with Scripture has no excuse, seeing that the Apostle is not weaving pretexts for delaying the *parousia* still further, but is simply explaining the delay already past. Men are in a hurry to have their wills accomplished; God can afford to bide His time. He never is too late because time proves too short for His readiness, nor too soon because time is too slow for His patience to hold out. All appearance of delay was due to the Lord's unwillingness "*that any should perish,*" and not come to repentance (ver 9).

The reference is chiefly to the Jewish race, and the possibility of greater numbers being "*saved from that untoward generation*" before the deluge of blood should sweep over them. Instead of the Apostle seeking to excuse further delay, he distinctly pledges himself as to the nearness of this "*day*

of judgement and perdition of ungodly men." He threatens them with *"swift destruction"; "their judgement now of a long time lingereth not and their damnation slumbereth not"* (2.1-3), while the Christians are with confidence *"looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God,"* because *"the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of trials and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgement."*

This judgement about to descend is described as a physical and temporal visitation. *"Heaven and earth are reserved unto fire" — "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up"* (3.10).

Page 335 - The "Elements" on Fire - This language has its parallel in our Lord's great discourse and in the Apocalyptic vision, 6.12-17, and beyond doubt they all describe the same event. Is it needful to say that this destruction is not to be taken in a modern scientific sense. As such, it would imply the wreckage of the universe, after a method that cannot happen. The destruction Peter anticipates is one paralleled by the destruction of the Noachian world in the flood, which was not cosmic, but only the destruction of the people with their earth and heaven, their civilization and their religion. The passage must be read in the light of oriental modes of speech. A similar destruction took place for Idumea in Isaiah 34.4,9,10.

This fire is the prophetic fire of every Old Testament judgement, and which Christ came *"to kindle in the land."* The *earth* is not the globe, but the land inhabited by the people ready to be judged. *Dissolved* and *melted* signify the total abrogation of the systems judged. The *elements* are not earth, air, fire, and water, but substantially the same as *"the elements of this world," "the beggarly elements"* we read of elsewhere. The word *stoicheia* (elements), carries a covert reference to the heavenly bodies, and in ancient thought these were the abodes of gods or powers that ruled the destinies of men, and by their movements all the feasts and fasts of religion were regulated. Hence the term here covers all those religious practices and superstitious belief; which ruled ancient life from the cradle to the grave.

Page 336 - The Cleansing Process - The whole scene, as Peter pictures it, is therefore just that fiery renovation of the world which runs through all Messianic prophecy, and especially comes to the front in all the New Testament allusions to the impending judgement of the Judaic age. In the Apocalypse we have seen this fire in process of consuming all the elementary things of man's moral and religious life that cumbered the path- way of Christ's coming chariot wheels. It is the shaking out of heaven and earth all the elementary conceptions which concealed the deep eternal principles which cannot be shaken (Heb 12.27).

It is the judgement of that God who is *"a consuming fire,"* and yet the very gentleness of patience when He works for man's salvation. Out of the cleansing process came *"a new heaven and new earth."* (3.13.) The day of universal grace that supervened on the destruction of the old Judaic and pagan earth was indeed a blessed *"day of visitation to the Gentiles,"* drawn all the more to the sweet and simple faith of the primitive Church that its Judaic elements had been consumed in judgement fires, and its adherents had illustrated its virtues through years of blood and fire.

The rejection of this interpretation involves the expositor of Scripture in very serious troubles. The Apostle's prophecy has been falsified, inasmuch as it did not happen when he said it should. Either then, it is not to be fulfilled at any time; or else it is to be accomplished at the end of the Christian age. That the incarnation, the atonement, the ascension and reign of Christ, and the Church's labours through centuries, are to end in such a disgraceful collapse for the universe we cannot believe. It writes *"failure"* on the works of creation and redemption alike. It contradicts the plainest of all Christ's prophecies, those that predict a universal victory for His kingdom in this world.

Page 337 - No other Interpretation possible - What becomes of the parables of the mustard seed, and the leaven, in which Christ foretells a slow and gradual but steadily progressive growth of His Kingdom towards universal conquest ? It implies that all through the Gospel age the world will be growing worse in faith and morals, and there be nothing for all our labour beneath the sun but complete physical destruction. Indeed, the difficulties are endless; and what the advantages are we fail to see.

ST. PAUL

Page 338 - THERE is every probability that "*the things hard to be understood*" which St. Peter found in the Epistles of St. Paul related to matters we now sum up under the heading "*eschatology*." Time has not helped the Church to a solution of these Pauline problems. The great Apostle is still badly understood, judging by the contradictory verdicts given by critics who have made a lifelong study of his position. Dr. S. Davidson affirms that St. John's eschatology is much more spiritual than St. Paul's, while Professor Sabatier calls our attention to the "*profound analogy*" between them. Almost all our standard commentators confess that they cannot interpret our Apostle except on the supposition that he was mistaken in some respects, and partially discovered his mistake before he ceased to write epistles. Indeed, it is now the fashion to take the position from which Jowett in his day seemed to shrink — "*to allow that St. Paul was mistaken, and that in support of his mistake he could appeal to the words of Christ Himself.*" It will be apparent that we have undertaken a task of tremendous difficulty if we mean to show that the Apostle did not err and is neither inconsistent with himself nor with the facts of history. Such, indeed, is our contention; and it will, we hope, be greatly to the credit of the preterist theory if we can even approximately prove our case.

Page 339 - St. Paul at Thessalonica - For obvious reasons we shall take up his Epistles in their chronological order. Happily this leads us directly to the heart of St. Paul's convictions as to the Second Advent. His statements in

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have not always the clearness or fullness of meaning we could desiderate with a view to the settlement of all outstanding controversies, but on certain points of moment nothing more need be desired. Much that we find puzzling arises from our traditional standpoints being so essentially different from the Scriptural, and from the Thessalonians having known Paul's mind so well that elaboration or minute explicitness which we now would gladly welcome was unnecessary for their purpose.

It is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles that St. Paul's teaching in Thessalonica shortly before the first of his Epistles was largely occupied with the Kingship of Jesus. Much emphasis was necessarily laid on the advent of the kingdom of God, the impending judgements connected with the violent transition of the Mosaic age into the Christian, and the new ethical character of the coming epoch. Apostolic preaching was pre-eminently a speaking to the times. The New Testament Scriptures are all strongly impregnated with an eager interest in a shortly expected

transformation of the world, and so disproportionally did this temporal aspect of the kingdom absorb the attention of Paul's hearers that, on his abrupt flight from the city in order to escape the persecutions of some venomous Jews, many of them had failed to grasp any sufficient idea as to the accompanying development of the kingdom amongst the human race beyond the grave.

Page 340 - St. Paul to the Thessalonians - This culpable ignorance or forgetfulness seems to have been the occasion of this first Epistle, and the definite instruction which we find in 4.13 - 18. The Second Epistle followed shortly after, and was perhaps occasioned by some slight misunderstanding of the First. Grouping their teachings, the results may thus be summed:—

1. ***The Second Coming*** is anticipated as a time of peculiar judgement (1.10; 5.3-9). Jesus, for whom they look from heaven, is described as their Deliverer from "***the wrath to come.***" By long habit of thought, most readers attach an exclusively next-world sense to such words, but we can scarcely doubt that the "***coming wrath***" of Scripture is primarily a **temporal judgement** which was to fall upon the world at the approaching end of the age — a visible and material Gehenna of fire into which God was about to cast His enemies. The apostolic generation justly attached extreme importance to this impending judgement day. The heavens and the earth were to be burned up with fire — "***sudden destruction***" to come upon that godless generation. In the face of such terrific adjurations, it was the delight of those within the Church to rejoice in their own immaculate safety, knowing that "***God had not appointed them to wrath, but to salvation.***" This judgement was to fall with especial severity upon the Jews (2.14-16). "***Judgement must begin at the house of God,***" and this time, the "***wrath is to the uttermost;***" i.e. to complete destruction of their national existence.

Page 341 - The Coming of a Jewish judgement - Faithlessness to the highest privileges necessarily reaps the severest doom. The Jews had crucified the Son of God; and instead of seeking a place of repentance during the quarter of a century which had elapsed, had increasingly persisted in their sin by an incessant musketry of persecution which almost made it impossible to preach the Gospel to the world. This hatred of the name of Jesus was to Paul the culmination of Jewish guilt. Their cup was running over. His divinely illumined eye saw in the events transpiring everywhere the token that God's wrath was about to burst upon His faithless people and never rest until it had made a final end. This drastic punishment is foretold in plainer form in the Second Epistle, written a few months later. God is to give His Church some rest, when Christ shall appear and punish the troublers "***with aionian destruction from the***

presence of the Lord " (1.6-12). Controversy enough has gathered about these words, but what they plainly say is that *"the people of God's presence"* are to be permanently broken off from the enjoyment of their distinctive privileges (Rom 9.4) in the age about to come; in other words, the Jews are to reap the penalty of their Christ rejection and persistent persecution of His people in the absolute rupture of the sacred relationship they had so long sustained. Now is it possible to deny that this judgement was consummated in the age-long destruction of the Jewish nationality ? Can it be denied that the Apostle does, in both Epistles, identify the final judgement of the Jewish economy with *"the revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven "*? Was not Paul's mind, like the rest of the Apostles' steeped in the idea of a judgement just at hand ? Did he not even venture to assert to the philosophic Athenians, shortly after he left Thessalonica, that *"God has appointed a day in which He IS ABOUT TO JUDGE the world by that Man whom He has ordained "*? (Acts 17.31).

Page 342 - The Thessalonians in Expectation - Does he not assure the Thessalonians that this day WILL OVERTAKE THEM, though *not as a thief*, because they are forewarned and forearmed ? And does the Apostle not feel it needful to pray that in the hazardous circumstances just impending the Thessalonians may be preserved IN BODY as well as in spirit *"unto the parousia of Christ"* ? Thus we see that Paul apprehends the *parousia* as near to that generation, as having special importance for the Jews, as involving bodily dangers for those exposed to its fiery tribulations; and also as a permanent dispensation of heavenly grace to the Christians who survive its dislocations. All these are familiar aspects of the *parousia* in the Scriptures we have examined up till now. In nothing does Paul diverge from the teaching of our Lord and the other Apostles.

2. The advent of Christ is signalled by a resurrection of the dead (1 Thess 4.13-18). Some of the Thessalonians were troubled about the relation of dead believers to the coming kingdom of God. It looks as if they had imagined that the kingdom would run a protracted course on earth before the dead would be raised to share its privileges. We need not wonder at their mistake, when we consider the confusion of ideas which still exists upon the subject of the kingdom. Their error is corrected by the simple statement, *"The dead in Christ rise first."* **The new age is instituted first beyond the veil; the kingdom of the heavens is opened; death is vanquished, and Hades despoiled of the believing dead.**

Page 343 - Where are those who "Sleep ?" - Thus opens the grand campaign of the world's salvation. The cardinal fact of the Christian dispensation is that the Christian dead are from the moment of its initiation, in the *presence* of their Lord, and that He and His risen Church are in close conjunction, dynamically though not visibly, with His Church

on earth. We are "***gathered together unto the Lord;***" we are come unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God. This is the age of the divine universal *presence* of God in Christ in contrast with the previous age when the Jews were "***the people of His presence***", and the Temple His only shrine.

It seems beyond all question that Paul held and taught that those who "***sleep***" are not visibly and consciously with Christ until their resurrection at the second coming. The Lord *descends* for them from heaven. They are called forth by His mighty energies from the state of death and caught up to be for ever with the Lord. If then the *parousia* has not yet transpired, we are letting sentiment run away with judgement when we speak of the saints as passing into heaven at death. **Scripture uniformly teaches that there is no resurrection till the Second Advent, and no living with Christ until the resurrection.** Such was our Lord's own teaching: "***When I have prepared a place, I will come for you,***" and only after this coming are they where He is. In Thessalonians Paul again and again brackets the *parousia* and the meeting with Christ, or "***our gathering together unto Him.***" No doubt he speaks later on of "***absent from the body***" as being "***present with the Lord,***" but this was natural, seeing that he knew death to be the only way to resurrection, **and the *parousia* to be so near at hand.**

Page 344 - St. Paul to the Thessalonians - However, Scripture is not self contradictory; and we beg our readers to note and inwardly digest the fact that there is *no presence* with Christ until this second coming, and then to give the fact its legitimate application to their own beliefs concerning the dead in Christ.

3. The Apostle taught that this coming was at hand. It is not necessary to fill this page with a consensus of passages in proof. As we have already said, the fact is almost universally admitted, and with a frankness that is often painfully explicit.

We limit our attention for the present to that well known passage in which the Apostle certainly impressed the Thessalonians with the conviction that when the Lord descends from heaven some of that generation will be alive. "***We who are alive and remain unto the parousia***" does not indeed assert that Paul himself will live to see that day, but it plainly means that some of them will live to see the abolition of the age and the birth of its glorious successor. How could Paul possibly cherish any other belief? Was he not aware of the sayings of our Lord, "***Some of you here shall not taste of death until you see,***" etc.; "***This generation shall not pass away***"? And with this knowledge it was surely no bold flight for him to prophesy, a quarter of a century later, that some of them would live into the day of the Lord. Some, however, say that the Apostle modifies his views in his

Second Epistle to this Church. So says Jowett; and yet with so little ground that Grotius, Baur, and Ewald assert that the Second Epistle was written first. Certainly Paul had occasion to moderate the expectations which his first had helped to excite.

Page 345 - The Coming, not Postponed - It is no wonder that, with their naturally eager and passionate natures and the unsettled condition of the world, they read the Apostle's "**soon**" as if he had said "**just now**," or within a year. But Paul corrects their blunder in the plainest terms. He writes, *"Don't think that the day of the Lord is PRESENT. It is not quite so near. As I told you when I was with you, the mystery of iniquity must reach up to a more horrible accentuation of profanity, even until a certain man will claim the right of sitting in God's temple, and receiving the worship due to God alone. You know what hinders that blasphemous climax from being reached, until it is taken out of the way."*

There is not the slightest indication here of any undue postponement of the *parousia*. The evil specified was already working. Whatever be our difficulties of identification, the Thessalonians had none. Paul had explained it all when among them. That fact is enough to condemn all futurist interpretations; for how was it possible for the Thessalonians to read a future that is utterly black to the scholars of today, unless they can see as far as Archbishop MacEvilly (Roman Catholic), who knows that the Man of Sin is attached to some great apostasy from his Church larger than that headed by Luther and Calvin ?

In all reason we cannot seek the interpretation in anything beyond the apostolic age. Within that field we can have a choice between **a Jewish** and **a Roman Man of Sin**, — for the first, following Tertullian, Whitby, Jowett, Weiss {Bib. Theo., i. 309}, Sabatier, though not quite confident (Sf. Paul, 119), Godet (Intro. au N. T.), Usteri and Le Clerc,

who name Simon of Gioras, and Stephenson, late rector of Lymphsham, who (Christology, vol. 1) cites proof upon proof that the Man of Sin is **Eleazer Thebuthis, first a Jewish Gnostic, then a Christian and rejected candidate for the bishopric of Jerusalem on the death of St. James, then an apostate, and finally a leader in the Jewish rebellion, possessing himself of the Temple and aiming at making himself the Messiah of the Scriptures;**

and for the second following Dr. Lee for **Domitian checked by Nero**, or Dollinger, Renan, Farrar, and mostly all the Fathers, **for Nero checked by Claudius** — *qui daudit* — who was against being personally worshipped as God.

Page 346 - The Man of Sin - Those familiar with the abominable blasphemies involved in the deification of the Roman emperors will not

hesitate to admit that this climax of iniquity, so intimately connected with the Jewish revolt, is a perfectly adequate fulfillment of Paul's prophecy. That some contemporary development of evil was before the Apostle's mind is evident by the whole tone of the Epistle, and the evident contrast drawn between the destruction coming on those who were deluded by the blasphemies of the time and the glory coming to the brethren by the belief of the truth. Such, however, is the unconscious twist that has come over many modern minds, that even while the latest commentator (Denney) admits that the apostasy here referred to is of the Jews, that the Temple is that then standing in Jerusalem, he yet maintains that ***"the precise anticipation which the passage embodies was not destined to be realised."*** ***"Inspiration did not enable the apostles to write history before it happened."*** Here then are more of Paul's mistakes !

Page 347 - The Coming Misconceived - Yet, with the grossest inconsistency, we are told that all this will be substantially fulfilled after ***"the fullness of time ;"*** so that we are to believe that an apostle who could not prophesy over a period of fifteen years is to be trusted if you will make his vision stretch over thousands, and that he who could not read the already visible signs of his times could write out a philosophy of history and prognosticate the end of all things !

The one blunder which underlies all this denial of the accuracy of New Testament prophecy, is a very mistaken idea of what is meant by the coming of the Lord. Commentators lay stress upon an event, the occurrence of a moment, the sudden revelation to all and sundry of a glorified omnipotent Christ, who is supposed by an immediate miracle to abolish evil, transform the physical world, open the burial grounds and bring up the dead to a permanent or at least a temporary sojourn on this earth.

All this is exceedingly gross, materialistic, opposed to every reasonable conception of God's methods, a violation of the law of continuity so profoundly revered by even the discoverers of these Jewish Apocalyptic ideas. Such interpreters are deceived by the strongly oriental language in which the Presence is commonly described. But a little calm consideration might show that the primitive conception of the second coming was not quite so hysterical as it is conceived to be. As Jowett says, ***" The habitual thought of the first Christians was not so much a 'coming' as a ' presence,' as its very name implied. "*** The distinction is of vast importance. What was looked for was not one miraculous event, but a dispensation — the coming of a kingdom, the presence of Christ in His sovereign power, — in other words, the age of Christ, the dispensation of His power, the institution of His personal authority in the seen and unseen worlds.

Page 348 - The Nature of Christ's Presence - Now, this so far as it was an event, or had a beginning in time, had its sign in the destruction of the former covenant. From that day forward, Christ's age had come in, the King was upon His throne, the dead had been gathered to Himself, and henceforth His work on earth was to subdue all wickedness to Himself. The language in which this is described in our Second Epistle may betray the reader into the conception of a visible Christ, warring in some physical way, with some transcendent enemy.

But if it were remembered that the most striking figure here (2.8) is simply a repetition of familiar Old Testament phrases which had their own fulfillment in Jehovah's victories over the idolatrous nations of the ancient world, it might then be easy to see that Christ's presence and victory over heathen idolatry imply no visible external pomp and glare of supernatural accompaniments, but a spiritual presence in His Church, a moral victory over error springing from His ascension to the throne of God, and His supremacy over the principalities and powers, and wickedness in heavenliness places which had kept the world in bondage.

There is another capital objection against finding the *parousia* accomplished in the apostolic age. The resurrection may, indeed, have taken place, since from its nature it might be invisible; but, it has been argued, ***"certainly there was no transfiguration and glorification of those who were alive and remained to the coming, as Paul very plainly taught."*** Such a transfiguration of living Christians into glorified saints without passing through death is one of the commonest ideas in eschatology,

Page 349 - The Rapture of the Saints - Well, those who demand it should consult Dr. Russell's ***"Parousia"*** and see what can be said in defence of the notion that it actually accompanied the *parousia* of those days. Frankly, we must confess that in our judgement this sign of the *parousia* was wanting. Perhaps we do not see it because long convinced that such a transfiguration is an *aberglaube*, and a most unhappy one, on apostolic teaching. Could Paul actually mean that at the *parousia*, whose beginning he most distinctly asserted was at hand, every Christian on the earth was suddenly to be rapt away into the heavens ? We are not justified in saying that Paul refers only to a few of the more select spirits then living in the Church.

He either means *all* Christians, or his words mean nothing. Then how were the promises of a universal reign of Christ on earth and of His kingdom as "everlasting" to be realized ? Why does Paul never in any of his Epistles frankly congratulate Christians on their probable escape from death, but rather distinctly congratulates the Corinthians that they and he shall be raised up together from the dead? (II 6.4).

The difficulties thicken the longer one thinks of it. Is it possible that at a time when the Church is confessedly weak the Lord is going to deplete it of its richest blood and either destroy it or leave it helpless ? Does Paul really contradict himself when he says that flesh and blood cannot see the kingdom of God, nor corruption inherit incorruption for what else is an instantaneous transformation of flesh and blood into a state of glory ? And, if the living at the *parousia* enter on heavenly glory at the very same moment as the believing dead, why should he in Philippians wish to depart (die) rather than abide in the flesh; and why does he describe going home to the Lord as being "*absent from the body*," or putting off his tabernacle ?

Page 350 - The Silence of History - In short, this idea of "*rapture*," though fondly held by multitudes, involves Paul's teaching on "*last things*" in the most flagrant inconsistencies, and makes a science of eschatology on any understanding quite impossible.

Nor is there anything in the silence of history as to the period about and after the fall of Jerusalem. It is not usually the Saints who write history, though they do much to make it; and surely the second-rate Christians who were left after the "*rapture*" to rule the church were competent enough to chronicle so startling an event as the sudden disappearance of the more illustrious leaders. As a matter of fact, we have satisfactory testimony to the deaths of the great apostles; and good reason for the scantiness of church history of the sub-apostolic age in the martyrdoms which continued from Nero's reign to Domitian's. * [**Clement to the Corinthians 1.3, 16; and for additional reasons, Ramsay's " Church in the Roman Empire," 2d. ed, p. 227.]**

Let us look with a little patience at what Paul actually teaches on this matter. Why does he say to the Thessalonians, "*We who are alive and REMAIN UNTO the parousia*," and not content himself with simply "*We who are alive AT the parousia*" ? Was he given to tautology of style ? Rather was he pregnant and elliptical, and careless of qualifying clauses which might readily be supplied by his readers. It is therefore next to certain that he had a deliberate meaning in this word "*remain*," and when it is seen that the *parousia* is not so much a local and temporary act as it is a permanent state or relation of Christ to His Church, the characteristic of the Christian age or the realised Kingdom of Christ, his meaning appears to be, "*We who are alive and remain living in the age of the parousia shall be caught up like them to meet the Lord.*"

Page 351 - The Rapture of the Saints - Everything here depends upon the meaning of the adverb *ἄμα* translated "*together*." This rendering inevitably suggests identity as to time. But while the word may have this temporal reference, it never carries it in the writings of St. Paul, but some other identity, of place, quality, or manner.

The Apostle's meaning can be seen from his repetition of the phrase a little further on. In 5.10, *"live together with Him "* cannot possibly mean that all Christians shall begin to live the resurrection life at the same moment as Christ begins to live it, but shall possess life of the same quality and in His company. Thus it is to be taken in this passage — predicating a similar resurrection into the company of the saints. The meaning is the same as in 1 Corth 15.51: *"We shall not all sleep "* (some of us will be alive when the Lord descends from heaven, and will not therefore share in the resurrection which takes place at the last trump), *"but we shall all be changed "* (from the earthly state into the heavenly, as in a moment).

This new order of procedure comes into operation after the resurrection which initiates Christ's Kingdom in the heavens. Our relation to Hades, which Christ shuts for his people, and to Heaven, which He opens, is so radically changed at this particular moment that henceforth death is utterly transformed. It is no longer a descent, a waiting for the fulfillment of a promised Deliverer, a state of comparative nakedness, but it becomes an instantaneous ascent to be for ever with the Lord.

Page 352 - First Corinthians - The teaching is precisely the same as in the Apocalypse, when, in connection with the resurrection, the proclamation is made, *"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth,"* Rev 14.13 because they enter at once on their rest and the full reward of their works, being immediately caught up into the glory of the Lord. This epoch of changed relations consists essentially in a closer conjunction of heaven and earth. God comes down with more abundant power for the glorification of His people; the life giving breath of Heaven bathes the Church more blessedly; and in this approximation of two worlds we are all *"gathered together unto the Lord,"* and are *"come unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God, and the spirits of just men made perfect."* Henceforth Christians do not die in the ancient sense, but are translated without pause into the heavenly land. Hades, with its terrors, is swallowed up of victory, and death is but the dropping of a veil, the opening of an eye, the rapture of the quickened soul from time into eternity.

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takes us forward a few years into the ever-ripening experience of the great apostle, but it shows no abatement in his expectations of the Lord's *parousia*. Indeed it shows that this subject had a powerful and permanent hold upon his mind, and seriously affected all his thinkings, and toned all his judgements of the events through which he had to pass. He compliments the Corinthians for their faithful *"waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ"* and assures them that they will be confirmed in faith *"unto the end,"* that is until *"the day of Christ"* (1.7-8).

Page 353 - The Lord's Coming a Jewish Judgement - Now in what particular respect were the Corinthians in danger of being misled ? In favour of believing in the imperative need of being subject to the Jewish law as well as to the Gospel of Christ. They were at this moment beset with Judaizing teachers, who were building on another foundation than Jesus Christ. Here is the danger. But the day of Christ, Paul says, is at hand ; it is to be revealed in fire ; and the fire is to burn up all that is not of Christ, to the loss and shame of those teachers and their dupes (3.13). This judgement is said to be impending — so near that the Corinthians are asked to suspend their verdict on the case between him and his opponents *"until the Lord come"* (4.5). And what fiery judgement will meet the requirements of the case, but the divine visitation upon Jerusalem, which is already described in Thessalonians as the *"wrath of God "* and *" flaming fire " ?* That surely was the specific judgement which settled the question between Paul and the Judaizers who were the vexation of his life; and beyond question this judgement day is identified with our Lord's *parousia*.

How actually near this day of judgement was is seen in Paul's earnest exhortation (7.29-30). Like a good captain, he is ordering the ship to be put in trim because the barometer indicate? a storm. *"The time is short"* till the *"instanding distress,"* will be upon them. Radical changes are impending, *"the scheme of the world is to pass away."* Just as our Lord gave warning as to certain unlucky domestic circumstances in the hour of His *parousia*, so does Paul.

Page 354 - "Then is the End" - It is better not to marry and not be encumbered with children in such a crisis, as these impediments will bring *"trouble in the flesh."* *"The ends of the ages"* were come upon that generation (10.11). All the preceding epochs of the world's history (2.8) were finding their culmination and final judgement in those apostolic days, and giving place to the great ideal age of prophecy, in which God's eternal purposes were to be fulfilled. Such a transition period was necessarily brimful of *"distress,"* and demanded the greatest watchfulness on the part of Christian men, even though they had the promise of special divine protection. When this is the constant attitude of St. Paul and his repeated note of warning, we surely are guilty of great presumption if we say he was mistaken. And on what subject are we to trust the apostolic judgement, if not upon one that affected him so profoundly and constantly as this ?

Indeed, our Epistle shows that Christ's Coming was a subject which had been carefully thought out by Paul, and an article of prime importance in his scheme of Christian thought. He tells us, for instance, that at Christ's *parousia* the resurrection of the dead takes place; but before that time all

rule and authority and power opposed to Him have been put down, the last of His enemies being death — *"then is the end."* (15.23-26). This whole passage is bristling with insoluble points to the old interpretation; but it falls easily into line with what we have found to be the teaching of the other Scriptures. The *"end"* is the only *"end"* of which Scripture knows anything, for of Christ's Kingdom or the gospel dispensation there is no end. We are standing at the close of the Judaic age.

Page 355 - Putting down all Rule, etc - Christ has come according to His own parable and taken the Kingdom or the Vineyard out of the hands of men who had usurped it, and claimed a right to its permanent possession. The New Testament tells us of Jewish dignitaries who must be humbled, of angels in whose hands the Covenant had been ordained, but who are superseded when Christ ascends to the Father's throne; of Satan and his angels in heaven with whom Christ and His angels fight, and whom He finally casts into the bottomless pit. All this work of conquest comes in between Christ's death and the resurrection of the dead. Paul speaks of it as if with knowledge which he did not choose to reveal. *"He made a show of principalities and powers, openly triumphing over them."* The last enemy to be overcome is death.

This is achieved first by putting down Satan who has *"the power of death,"* and then by opening the gates of Hades, and leading forth death's captives into the heavenly place prepared for them. This grand work of conquest done, the Kingdom is of course by its accomplishment restored to God. The usurpers of whom we have read in Scripture are all dethroned, and an age begins which knows no sovereign but the Lord God Almighty, and no mediator but God's only-begotten Son.

Some reader may demur to our suggestion that the first resurrection took place after the close of the Judaic age, on the ground that such an event must leave its mark on history, while history's page is blank. This objection presupposes that the resurrection is a carnal re-embodiment. Certainly, it is not. The bodies with which the saints come forth are *"spiritual,"* or *"heavenly,"* or *"glorified."* What have such bodies to do with earth and time and space ?

Page 356 - The Resurrection Near - The way from Hades to Heaven does not lie through the cities and villages of this world. No eye of flesh can trace that passage; no mortal form can intrude upon its privacy; its thronging multitudes let no footfall be heard by sensuous ears; no record of such transactions can be written for the daily press. If men stumble at this, it is because like the Sadducees they do not know *"the power of God,"* the multiplicity of the bodies He has constituted in this universe, the secrets of inscrutable wisdom.

If we turn to 5.51 we shall there plainly read that this resurrection was then immanent. Paul says "*we shall not all sleep,*" that is, at "*the last trump,*" the signal of this deliverance of the dead. If this were true, what date within a lifetime was more likely than immediately after the old dispensation was judged and done away ? Indeed, if we turn to "the last trump" in the book of Revelation, we find that it is the time for the judgement and resurrection of the dead, and that it is also the close of the old dispensation, as witnessed in the overthrow of Jerusalem.

Another objection is based on the idea that at the resurrection the living saints are to be caught away instantaneously to heaven. Our readers know that this opinion is based on a remarkable paucity of proof. Only two passages, or at most three, in Paul's writings seem to say anything in its support.

The first and strongest, we have seen, contains no such teaching. Neither does the verse which is now before us. What Paul teaches is that from "*the last trump*" forward, the manner of resurrection is essentially changed. Before this, Hades received the dead, and they wait for the Lord's appearing to raise them up into His heavenly Kingdom; after Hades has been emptied, the saints who die are instantly changed and caught up to join the heavenly ranks.

Page 357 - Changed in a Moment - Therefore it is true, as Dean Stanley says, that in this chapter "*the whole resurrection of the human race is represented as one prolonged fact of which the resurrection of Christ is the first beginning.*" Although our resurrection will not transpire in the category, "*those who are Christ's at His coming,*" we nevertheless fall into that other, "*every man in his own order,*" amongst his own band, as the great "*change*" overtakes him, and with the happier fortune of being spared waiting in intermediate and imperfect states for the appearing of our Lord. And so it appears that Paul is completely misunderstood when it is asserted that he expected not to die but to be wrapt away as a living man to Heaven. **The new order of immediate transfer into glory at the moment of death, from the occurrence of the Parousia. onward is mistaken for transfer without death at the Parousia.**

Any other interpretation makes Paul's teaching contradictory. Flesh and blood which is stained with sin is not to inherit incorruption. He speaks of his own death, while still thinking that he may live into the *parousia*; and in this same Epistle writes to the Corinthians of their and his own resurrection (6.14). It can scarcely be doubted that if he had anticipated for himself and his friends such a pleasing escape as this, his epistles would have contained many jubilant anticipations of such good fortune. Nor can the silence of the other Scriptures be explained. This "*rapture*" was no common place experience likely to be treated with neglect.

Page 358 - "Maran-tha." - Was Peter not aware of it, or why his silence ? Was our Lord aware of it, then why did He say *"Some of you standing here shall not taste death until you see the Son of Man coming,"* and not rather — *"Some of you shall see the Son of Man coming and not taste of death" ?* Such silence might well make us suspicious that this doctrine is not taught by St. Paul, especially when he makes so little of it that it is only to be deduced from two passages susceptible of a totally different meaning. As we finish our glance at this Epistle, our eye is caught by the startling interjection of the two Syriac words **"MARAN-ATHA"** (*"The Lord cometh !"*), so significant after the imprecation upon Christ's enemies and immediately before the solemn benediction which closes all. It is probable, as Renan remarks, that these were passwords which the Christians used to encourage one another in their hopes. Can these hopes, universally entertained, supported by the remembered utterances of our Lord, and taught directly by all His Apostles, have been totally delusive and grossly mistaken as the modern church declares ?

SECOND CORINTHIANS

The Epistle to which we have now come takes us forward only a very little way, in all probability not more than a year, into the life of St. Paul. There was no time for any perceptible change from the views of the Second Advent expressed in the First Epistle. But certain interpreters take advantage of the fact that this epistle contains no direct allusions to an impending *parousia* to more than hint that the Apostle was beginning to discover his mistake.

Page 359 - Paul's Change of View - So careful a student as Sabatier says that *"notions maintained to the end of the First Epistle to the Corinthians disappear or at least are transformed from the Second onwards. . . . The parousia, is indefinitely postponed, and makes room for a darker and more sorrowful perspective."* The author, however, betrays the rashness of his assertion, again and again, as when commenting on Philippians he says, *"Paul still expects, as he always had done, the great day of the Lord."*

This supposed change of view is based largely on the notion that Paul till now has been positively asserting that he will live to the time of the *parousia*, and was passionately desirous of so living. We again affirm the absence from Paul's pages of any assertion that he will be alive at the *parousia*. As the event was so near, he would not have been human if he had not desired to see it. When, however, he gives expression to his natural desire to live longer in the world, he never once mentions the *parousia* as the boundary of that desire, nor gives as his reason the wish to escape from death by a miraculous transformation.

If he entertained this passion to the degree credited to him, it is most strange that nowhere has it found unmistakable expression. On the other hand, he frequently takes for granted that he shall die. And still, when in 2 Corth 1.8, he writes that he has been nigh to death and goes on to add, *"Death worketh in us,"* and *"God will raise us up also with Jesus,"* the judgement of many is voiced in Dean Stanley's note, *"An exception to the general expectation of the Apostle."* The *Speaker's Commentary* can only avoid the attribution of change to Paul by asserting that being *"raised up with Jesus "* here means that he will always supernaturally recover from his sickness as if this evasive gloss did not simply add another mistake to those with which Paul is credited !

Page 360 - II Corinthians 5.1-9 - It is this unfortunate belief in *"the rapture of the saints"* which misleads expositors. For years before this time, St. Paul knew that he carried his life in his hand. Did he not write, *"I die daily,"* *"am always delivered unto death,"* and in the First Epistle declare his settled impression that *"God had set forth the Apostles as men doomed to death "?* Is not the entire conclusion of chap 4 occupied with this idea that his outward man is perishing? And is not chap 5 a brilliant exposition of how it matters nothing to him that the earthly tabernacle is dissolving, since in the inward man he is renewed day by day ? We do not mean to raise the question as to what becomes of Apostolic inspiration, or whether doctrinal error is consistent with any form of inspiration worthy of the name. All we care to ask is, Can the Apostle's writings be made intelligible even when the commentator is allowed the assistance of this supposed change in his convictions ?

Let us take as a test this classical passage about the heavenly tabernacle (5.1-9). Is there a commentator up to the latest who does not betray the perplexity which the acute Whitby so frankly acknowledges: *"I confess it is difficult to give the clear sense of the Apostle's words "?* Consult . Meyer — usually so lucid — on what a sea of trouble one is launched ! Take Pfleiderer's or Sabatier's attempts to systematize the Apostle's beliefs, and what confusion covers the whole subject, although the latter almost seizes the meaning of the present passage !

Page 361 - The Heavenly Body - How are we to harmonize the single point that the dead sleep and wait till Christ descends for them with this supposed later view that *"to be absent from the body "* is to be with Christ in heaven ? Does Bishop Lightfoot help us by telling us to qualify the one representation by the other ? *"Asleep and waiting "* and yet *"with Christ "* — who can resolve these contradictions into any intelligible idea ? What secret can harmonize the Apostle's hope to keep his earthly body and be with Christ with His immediately afterwards expressed affirmation that to be in the body is to be absent from the Lord, and to put off the body is to

be with Him? But we must call a halt, and proceed to unfold what we believe to be the Apostle's teaching in this passage.

It is in explanation of what he has just said of the renewal of his inward man while the outward man is dying, that he proceeds:— "***If this earthly tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God.***" There would be no room for the questions expositors raise as to when this heavenly body is possessed if only they had observed Paul's conception as to how Christians come into its possession. He certainly did not hold the common notion that the future body is a separate creation into which the naked spirit mechanically slips at the word of Divine command. With all plainness he has taught us that the process is by vital growth, as the seed corn clothes itself gradually for the new function it is to fulfill. Not otherwise in any case does the Creator make bodies than by organization around the central vital nucleus, which thus comes into relation with a harmonious environment. The heavenly body is therefore a crystallization of heavenly substance around the soul, conditioned by its ethical spirit, as the fleshly body comes to bear the impress in its countenance of the soul which dwells behind it.

Page 362 - Inward Glorification - Nature may well be trusted as God's prophet in this matter, especially when Paul distinctly homologates this method of being clothed upon. How otherwise can we construe his statement, "***God quickens our mortal bodies by His Spirit dwelling in us*** " ? He seems to say that when our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost there is a quickening process going on within, creative of another substantial form, although not occupying space as known to us, so that when the former is dissolved the "inward man" is found in a superior body, in a sense derived from the first as to its εἶδος or essential form. * [**Baur is the only first-class interpreter who has at all seized aright conception of the Apostle's meaning. His remarks are well worth careful study. — St. Paul, II., pp. 205-8.**]

Did this idea find only isolated expression in his writings, we might doubt his meaning; but have we not the same idea when he uses the analogy of the glorification of Moses in the Mount and says that we, looking (mentally) in the face of Christ, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit, which is the Lord ? "**Glory**" is not merely sanctification, but transformation of our inward manhood by participation in heavenly qualities. The same idea lies in the antithesis of the decaying outward man and the daily renewal of the inward. The Apostle faints not before his visible decay because conscious that "**the more the marble wastes, the more the statue grows,**" while looking at eternal things. Is not the same truth expressed again when, a little later on, he writes, "**He that hath wrought us for this selfsame thing is God** " ?

Page 363 - Resurrection already begun - The process of *"mortality being swallowed up of life "* is not one altogether relegated to the future, but has been in continuous process since the Apostle received the gift of that Spirit whose presence is the earnest of the full possession of the heavenly form. And this process, of which he has been conscious in himself, the Apostle prays his Ephesian brethren may know experimentally: *"the greatness of God's power to usward according to His working in Christ when He raised Him from the dead."* It follows from this conception of the glorified body as a PRESENT work of God, dependent for its rapidity of growth and measure of glory on the fullness of the Spirit's power in us, that Paul may speak of it as a present possession which becomes functional in spirit-life at death; or, in humbler mood, speak dubiously, as when he writes to the Phillipians, *"Not as though I had already attained "* (the resurrection of the dead) *"or were already perfect,"*

i.e. in his inward heavenly resurrection form; and, again, may write of it as a body only perfected when Christ shall appear, and we shall be made like Him in the fullest degree, because we shall see Him as He *is* and by the contemplation of His glory be changed from *" the fashion of the body of humiliation into conformity to His glorious body."* Holding this view, Paul might well say that though his fleshly body should soon be dissolved, as he feared it might from his manifold afflictions, he has nevertheless this comfort: that by his conscious renewal in the inward man he has already a heavenly house for the dwelling place of his soul. When Paul's actual teaching is comprehended we can understand how Hymenseus and Philetus came to teach that *" the resurrection was past already"* (2 Tim 2.18).

Page 364 - Longing to be Clothed upon - That shows that the resurrection was not understood to be a physical resuscitation and earthly appearance of the dead; nor a distant occurrence at the end of all things, but an unseen and immanent event, since otherwise they would have been refuted by the simple fact that it had not happened. The approximation of this opinion to the Apostle's own teaching may be guessed from the mildness of his rebuke: *"Concerning' the truth, they have missed the mark."*

The *"longing to be clothed upon "* of the second verse is almost unanimously taken to mean that Paul was anxious not to die, but to be caught away in rapture. With all our heart we say with Baur: *"A mere expedient of interpretation."* Why, the Apostle has just been belittling the effects of death, and now he is made to be afraid of it ! He is only expressing the common feeling that the earthly life is burdensome, because man in the flesh is *"subject unto vanity,"* and that in the Christian heart especially there is a strong desire for a more exalted life, *"to wit, the redemption of the body,"* or full adoption into Divine incorruptible sonship.

To *"put on over"* is not the gross and incongruous idea of covering the earthly body with a heavenly one. Such a conception is utterly un-Pauline, as we shall see. The heavenly body is put on over the soul by the indwelling Spirit of God from heavenly substances, as the seed germ has a new body put over it by the Spirit of God in nature.

Verse 3 is made perplexing with various Greek readings. Alford makes it to read, *"seeing that we shall really be found clothed and not naked."* The Revised Version abides by the Received, and is more hypothetical: *"If so be that,"* etc.

Page 365 - Soul Nakedness - Then a very old reading, which Sabatier maintains is the original, substitutes *"unclothed"* for *"clothed."* Two false views are taken of the Apostle's meaning. Chrysostom, Calvin, Usteri, and others, take it to refer to spiritual nakedness, the absence of the robe of righteousness. But this is to introduce an idea foreign to the context. Others (Bengel, Billroth, Conybeare and Howson, Weiss,) interpret as referring to the Apostle's escape from death by continuance in the flesh until the Second Coming. This interpretation makes Paul's statement purely personal, or at least only applicable to his own generation; but the kindred reference in Rom 8.20-25 shows that Paul holds this longing to belong to human nature, and especially to Christians who are filled with the Spirit.

The interpretation we submit is suitable whatever Greek reading be preferred:— *"If so be that being completely clothed with the heavenly body our spirits are not found naked at death, and comparatively helpless in that other world, as heathen men believed themselves to be";* or, with the other reading, *"so that being unclothed of the body of the flesh we are not naked and helpless spirits."* The longing for being unclothed of the fleshly body could not possibly exist if the possession of the superior body were believed to be a distant possibility, with a painful interregnum of soul-nakedness. Thus plainly does Paul refute a view of the resurrection body which is commonly believed to be his own. Verse 4 is almost universally interpreted as expressing an idea not flattering to Paul's manliness. Alford actually tells us that the Apostle and his fellow Christians groaned and were afflicted, because not willing to divest themselves of their earthly bodies !

Page 366 - At Home with the Lord - Surely such a feeling was entirely alien to Paul, as it has been to every spiritually-minded Christian since. The truth is that he is here repeating the idea just expressed in a slightly different form in order to repudiate for himself and other Christians the Stoic notion then prevalent that it was right to long for death, and even commit suicide if weary of the world. No such selfish and morbid desire to be rid of life is to be found within the Christian's breast.

" More life and fuller 'tis we want "

even that glorious state in which we are equal to the angels of God, being children of the resurrection.

Then immediately (ver 5) he claims that God has already been weaving the texture of this heavenly body within the vesture of the mortal. And this confidence makes him always of good courage. He is not afraid of death, nor does he shrink from it, because to be in the body is to be absent from the Lord, and to be present with the Lord is the consummation of all his possible desires. Is it not strange that the Apostle should ever have been understood to be expecting and desiring to keep his body alive and to be at home with Christ in it ? His meaning is the direct negation of such a thought.

To some there is a difficulty in the way Paul couples "*being absent from the body*" and "*being at home with the Lord,*" as it looks inconsistent with his doctrine that the dead are not with Christ until the resurrection. The solution is easy when two things are kept in view: first, that to the Apostle there is no such thing as "*rapture*" or being present with Christ otherwise than by laying aside the body; and secondly that, according to his belief, the interval between his death and the descent of Christ for His dead is so very brief that, as Delitzsch remarks, he may well pass by the intermediate state in silence. * ["**Psychology," English translation, p. 510.]**

Page 367 - The Gain of Dying - St. Paul would never have written to the Philippians, "*It is better to depart and be with Christ,*" "*To die is gain,*" if he had believed that he would be as soon with Christ by remaining alive to the *parousia*; but knowing that even if the *parousia* were come, death was still the only way into the state of glory, he did not care for himself how soon death might come, knowing that it would not find him naked, and therefore in a state less happy than he was on earth. * [**Our latest interpreter (Denney) sees no change in the Apostle's views; but is so far in confusion that he actually believes that the heavenly body is put on over the body of flesh and blood, and that at this time Paul stands in such contradiction with himself that he has a "shuddering fear of dying" and hopes to escape " the terrific experience of death."** Was this Paul's feeling about death at any time, and especially when he wrote that he preferred to die rather than to live on ?]

The exposition now submitted shows that this passage is perfectly lucid and self consistent, perplexing as it has been to the multitude of expositors. It will be seen that the Pauline doctrine of the resurrection includes two processes for the Christian: first, the clothing of the spirit with a body of heavenly texture by the working of the indwelling Spirit, a process begun here and perfected by closer contact with the Lord;

secondly, ascent from Hades when the Lord descends for His people at the *parousia*, and after that event immediate ascent into the heavenly state in the degree in which the soul is clothed upon with heavenly essences. The first was already in process with St. Paul, and it might be near its completion; the second could only be accomplished at the *parousia*.

Page 368 - The Epistle to the Galatians - Long study has convinced us that the entire teaching of the New Testament on last things becomes simple and harmonious on these lines, and we confidently commend this view to our reader's patient and prayerful study.

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

This letter is believed to come at no great distance after the Epistles to the Corinthians; indeed, the assertion is sometimes made that it ought to come before them. In any case, we can hardly expect to find further information on the subject of the *parousia*. There are, however, certain definite references well worth our attention. In chapter 1.4, we are told that the aim of Christ's sacrifice was our deliverance from "*the present evil age.*" The contrast before the Apostle's mind is not that of this material world as evil over against heaven as holy, but the idea which is developed so fully in our Lord's discourses, of two successive ages in this world — the age of law and sin and the age of grace and everlasting righteousness. We see here that in Paul's judgement, the Judaic age was still running, because not yet officially abolished, and the Christian age not yet initiated publicly by the deposition of its predecessor. It is not needful that we should again remind our readers how perfectly this is in keeping with the chronological standpoint of all the New Testament writers. The old age had not yet reached its consummation, and the kingdom of Christ had not then externally come.

Page 369 - The Old and New Jerusalems - The only other reference to be noticed is 4.25,26. Here Jerusalem and its legal religion is compared to Hagar, and said to be in bondage with its children, whereas the Jerusalem which is above is free. We have to note again that for Paul at this point the New Jerusalem has not yet come down from heaven; that is, the gospel age is not yet initiated, the New Testament Church has not officially supplanted the Old. It does exist in heaven, it waits for the fullness of the times, the moment when there can fittingly be a "*restitution*" or turning back to the great fundamental religious principles of Eden and the days of Abraham; and then, as seen in the book of Revelation, it descends, and the Church officially exists as the one and only representative of God on earth. Meanwhile, the seat of the old Covenant is a place of bondage. It imposes on its votaries burdens too hard to be borne; demands

righteousness without imparting power, as the Egyptians demanded bricks without straw. Hence, in Rev 11.8, Jerusalem is said to be spiritually called "**Egypt**" out to call his people, by separating them from the outer courts of His temple, i.e., from a legal and ceremonial service inconsistent with the liberty and universality of true worship in the Kingdom of Christ.

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

This letter proceeds but a very little way before the reader is startled with the ominous rumble of the sounds of approaching judgement (2.5,6,9,10). As in Peter, the Jew is to be judged first; on "**the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according' to my Gospel**" (ver 16).

Page 370 - The Epistle the Romans - What Paul taught as to the time when this judgement: would take place can be seen by turning to the addresses spoken at Caesarea somewhere about the time this Epistle was written. In his confession before the Roman judge he distinctly announced his faith in an immanent resurrection: "**having hope in God that there IS SOON TO BE a resurrection both of the just and unjust**"; and a few days later, when asked to explain the Christian faith more fully, "**he reasoned of the judgement ABOUT TO COME**" (Acts 24.15,25), and brought it so well home to the immediate interests of Felix that he trembled. Now, as this resurrection and judgement are functions which St. Paul held to belong distinctively to the advent of Christ, it is evident that he was still strong in the expectation of a *parousia* close at hand.

Nor indeed does the Apostle shrink from committing himself to this effect before the Roman Church. In 8.18, *et seq.*, he speaks of the resurrection as "**the redemption of the body from the bondage of corruption,**" and contrasting it with the present state, calls it "**the glory to be revealed in us.**" Well, is this a distant prospect ? By no means. He writes: "**It is about to be revealed.**" Most translators **seem afraid to record it**, but so it is written; and the whole tone of the Apostle's expectations is derived from this inspiring belief. He appeals confidently to the Church's knowledge of the times and seasons. "The night is far spent and the day is at hand" (13.12) — the day of the Church's salvation, when "**God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly**" (16.20). The reference here is externally to the humiliation of the Jew in the visible destruction of the Mosaic Covenant.

Page 371 - The Restoration of the Jews - That abated Jewish persecutions, ended all weighty claims to the perpetuity and extension of Jewish ceremonial within the Church, and so brought peace from "**the God of peace.**" More profoundly, the bruising of Satan lay in Christ wresting the dead from his power, and apportioning resurrection or condemnation, according to His own authoritative will. Death was no longer in Satan's

hands. "*I have the keys of Death and Hades.*" There is only one point more to notice in this Epistle. **In most modern prophetic schemes the restoration of the totality of the Jewish race to Palestine holds a conspicuous place.** St. Paul is the only New Testament writer who makes the slightest allusion to Israel's distant fortunes. (Rom 11) It is somewhat difficult to determine his precise belief as to the effect of the Advent on his people. He certainly does not teach the restoration of the Jews to Palestine, nor a revivification of Jewish modes of worship. He says that Israel is not cast off absolutely and irrevocably,

[The Latter half of the Book Ezekiel speaks of the restoration of Israel to Palestine. The state of Israel has existed since 1948 and in a state of Unbelief as prophesied Ed PB]

The temporal judgement of the nation does not involve the eternal preterition of the individuals who compose it. Therefore the Apostle sees a hope for Israel. Its very chastisement is intended by the unchanging God to be a door of repentance. When the Redeemer returns to Zion to purge the iniquity of His people, judgement ought to work salvation for those who are its witnesses. Seeing the dispensation overthrown and the Gentiles progressing in Divine favour through their faith in Christ, Israel will have the strongest motive to quit its unbelief, and, repenting, will be saved. Thus Paul vindicates God's faithfulness to His people; but beyond asserting that all Israel can and may be saved if taught by the Providence of their times, he does not pass.

Page 372 - The Epistle to the Ephesians - The times of "*the fulness of the Gentiles*" after the *parousia*, before which they were only proselytes of the gate of Christianity, did see the conversion of many Jews to Christ, but the great mass remained unconvinced. There can be little doubt that such hopes as the Apostle cherished concerning Israel were fixed on a future very near to his own day, in harmony with his other expectations concerning the *parousia* and its effects.

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

Paul in this Epistle treats our subject in a broader and more occult way than in any other of his Epistles. He scarcely speaks of the coming of Christ; but his thoughts are big with the Advent and its consequences. It introduces "*the dispensation of the fullness of the times*": the world's majority, the full-orbed spiritual privileges for which the race was created (i. 10). This grand reconciling age is not yet come (ver 21), but Christ is already exalted to supreme power in the Heavens, and His sovereignty will soon be manifest in the introduction of a dispensation in which the Gentiles will be elevated to the fullness of sonly privilege. This is the "mystery" hidden from all previous ages, and made known especially

through Paul himself (3.2,3). This great movement is the unification of heaven and earth, and not merely of Jew and Gentile. God comes down to earth to dwell among men.

Page 373 - Shadow and Substance - He comes into His inheritance (2.18) because the Kingdom is now made subject to the Father; and we come into our inheritance (1.14), because Christ has opened the Holiest to believers in the resurrection of the saintly dead, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit without measure to His Church, The days are still evil (5.16), the Sovereignty of Christ not yet manifest; but every sympathetic reader feels that the Apostle's mind is filled with the conviction that the new age *"is about to come"* (1.21), and the Church's installation as the heir of the world just at hand.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

This letter is in tone very like that to the Ephesians. Still, we shall find here that St. Paul continues to occupy the same outlook with regard to the coming and Kingdom of Christ as he did in the earliest of his Epistles. As we read, we come first upon a statement to which we have already called attention (p. 298) as explaining the sense in which our Lord meant the gospel to be preached in all the world *"before the end."* In 1.23, Paul claims that this work has been fully done, and we cannot doubt that this was to himself one of the signs that the *parousia* was at hand.

In chap 2.17 we have a remark which clearly reveals the Apostle's temporal standpoint at this period. The verse is not properly translated in our current versions. Referring to certain Jewish ordinances he says they are *"a shadow of things about to come, but the body is Christ's."* It is customary for expositors to project the emphatic words into the spirit world, because they suppose that Christ's Kingdom had already come in the Apostolic days.

Page 374 - The Epistle to the Colossians - But we trust we have exposed this fallacy so completely that our readers will now be ready to agree substantially with Meyer: *"These things belong altogether to the age about to come, which will begin with the coming again of Christ to set up His Kingdom — a Kingdom, however, which was expected as very near at hand." The reasonableness of the interpretation is evident if only it be remembered that the "shadows" were still visibly in force, and the Christian dispensation not visibly nor officially ushered in. Therefore the body, of which Mosaic symbolism was the shadow, was not yet come in its full reality.*

In the 20th verse we have another note repeated from verse 8, which indicates the contrast Paul saw between past ages and the coming age of Christ. *"The rudiments of the world,"* that is, the elementary religious

fancies of the world, embodied in Jewish and heathen thought alike, are now obsolete and worthless things for Paul compared to the fullness of wisdom to be found in Christ. The Divine sentence was soon to be passed upon those phases of religious life in their most perfect form as centered at Jerusalem. Like Peter, our Apostle believed that **"the wrath of God was coming"** (3.6) upon these elementary forms of faith, as systems fruitful only in fostering **"idolatry."** All the adherents of these systems would pass under the severest judgements, but what to them was death would be life indeed to all who were in Christ Jesus. The same epoch would see the manifestation of Christ in glory to His saints, and when He appeared those who were His would be manifested in a similar heavenly glory (3.4).

Page 375 - No Change of View - This statement has a double fulfillment — first, in this life, when Christ being proven Lord and King by the judgement of His enemies, His people share approximately in His glory; but chiefly it is fulfilled in the personal glorification of each believer as in putting off the veil of the flesh he attains to the vision of Christ.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

We find ourselves drawing somewhat close to the end of the Apostle's days, and with the greatest interest we may well scan this letter to see if the years have made any change in his views. Very soon (1.6) we come upon a significant reference to **"the day of Jesus Christ."** Then we come upon another (10), and still another (2.16). There are two significant features in these references:— 1st. The day is one which the Philippians will live to see; and, 2nd, it is a day of manifestation or judgement. We have already seen that such is an inseparable accompaniment of the Second Coming. Christ judges the dead on His descent from heaven; and the tribulation which tests the faith of His Church on earth, separates the wheat from the chaff, and commends or condemns the Christian Teacher whose work is thus put to the test.

That this day of Christ is very near in the Apostle's conviction is placed beyond all doubt by his emphatic statement (4.5), **"the Lord is at hand."** What then about his supposed expectation and desire that instead of dying he will be transfigured alive ? Now is the time when these ought to be felt and expressed most strongly. But what then are we to make of his candid statement (1.21) that **"to die is gain,"** and that his own preference is to put off the flesh ?

Page 376 - The Epistle to the Philippians - Where now is the supposed **"earnest desire"** of 2 Corth 5.2 It is gone from the Epistle to the Philippians — because it had no existence anywhere. Why, too, is it that **"to depart"** or die is **"to be with Christ,"** if so be that the living are caught up to be with Christ at the same moment as those who are dead ?

These questions cannot be answered on the usual hypothesis. Nor does the answer satisfy, that the dead are nearer to Christ than the living. Paul nowhere teaches that. The dead wait for Christ till His *parousia*, when He descends *from* heaven for them; and therefore Paul could not mean that death would unite him to Christ before the *parousia*. How, then, is the inconsistency to be solved ? In this simple manner — Paul knew that the day of the Lord was just at hand, and that dying was the only way to heavenly glory; therefore dying was better than living, and death that was not far distant was just in his view equidistant with the coming of his Lord to take His saints to glory. Thus naturally and most consistently does Paul express himself, and not otherwise can he be understood.

Look now at Paul's peculiar expressions as to the resurrection. **"If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead"** (3.11). No serious objection need be taken to the view that Paul means **"the first resurrection"** at Christ's *parousia*. But what does he refer to when immediately he adds — **"Not that I have already attained, or am already made perfect"**? Meyer says, it is to **"the bliss of the Messiah's Kingdom."** Surely, there was no need for Paul to make so obvious a remark, or to leave so abruptly, in words that look so continuous, his former line of thought.

Page 377 - Sanctification and Glorification - What he really means is — that he is not yet in a state of ripeness for the resurrection — not yet perfect in his pneumatic form. How natural this remark is becomes immediately evident when we remember Paul's doctrine concerning' the present growth and possibly perfect development of the house from heaven around the spirit. He wishes to be perfectly clothed upon at death, so as not to be found naked or only half clothed with his heavenly form. But he is not prepared to say or take for granted that this state has been attained; he presses on, however, into the fullness of the self-sacrificing mind of Christ if so be that this prize of the high calling may be obtained ! The process of sanctification proceeds *pari passu*. with the perfecting of the spirit form.

Meanwhile he waits for this Saviour from heaven — this quickening Redeemer whose work it is to change this body of humiliation for one heavenly like his own (3.21). The process of spirit-clothing is continued into a long and steady process of glorification, by open intercourse with the risen Christ. But only **"the ages to come"** will unfold the secret of how much it is in God's heart to do for His Christian people.

THE EPISTLES TO TIMOTHY AND TITUS

The Pastoral Epistles give us the Apostle's latest convictions on this subject. We may not find in those letters statements as clear and definite

as in some of the earlier Epistles, but. we are not on this account at liberty to conclude that the Apostle's interest in the subject is abated, much less that he has altered his expectations, or indeed to settle anything more than that the doctrine is by this time so well understood by his correspondents that it requires nothing' to be written in explanation or defence.

Page 378 - The Pastoral Epistles - The nearness of the coming is clearly asserted when Timothy is exhorted to fight the good fight of faith "*without reproach until the appearing: of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" In the Second Epistle this admonition is repeated in a form which leaves no mistake as to Paul's belief: "*I charge thee in the sight of God and of Christ Jesus, who IS ABOUT to judge the quick and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom*" (4.1). What more explicit language could the Apostle use to express his constancy to his earlier convictions ?

The Epistle to Titus contains a passage which shows that this anticipation was the common attitude of the Catholic Church of the period: "*We should live . . . godly in this present age, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ*" (2.12,13). This verse has two noteworthy phrases: "*this present age*" (not "*world*"), by which he means, as in Galatians, "*this present evil age,*" over which Satan is god. The Apostle's antithesis is not, as Bishop Lightfoot says, between "*this transitory world and the other world of eternity.*" The eternal world cannot well be called "*the coming age,*" or, as in Heb 6.5, "*the age about to come,*" — although two of the Apostolic Fathers take it in that sense. If the Bishop is right, we must conclude that Christ's mission is to save Christians out of this world into eternity and to leave this present world under the dominion of Satan, as it was in Apostolic times.

Page 379 - Not a Personal Manifestation - The contrast rather lies between that godless and idolatrous age, which had so nearly run its course, and the succeeding Christian age, in which the Divine name would be again reinstated in its just authority. This had been long understood in Israel to be one of the functions of the Messiah, "*the Father of the age to come,*" and is constantly referred to in the New Testament as the Gospel's gift to the human race — the promise of the life which now is as well as of the life to come.

The other phrase we wish to notice here is the decidedly impersonal one in which the Apostle describes the *parousia*. Many read into every intimation of the Advent a strictly visible appearance of the person of the Saviour to the material eye. This passage rather intimates that the *parousia* is not a visible personal manifestation of Christ in this life, but chiefly a mental perception of the signs of His presence with His Church and of His Divine supremacy as seated on His Father's throne.

The visible Christ is the peculiar prize of those who have passed within the veil. St. Paul here tells us that what is manifested is *the glory* of Christ, which is also *the glory* of the great God — the one and only God claiming His supremacy over all the races of the earth, and calling upon all nations to worship Him through the one Mediator, Jesus Christ. In short, this epiphany is identical with the initiation of the Gospel age as a world wide dispensation, exalting the glory of God as the one and only sovereign, and the glory of Christ as the one and only Saviour of the world.

Another very distinctive landmark is found in these Pastoral Epistles. It will be remembered that our Lord intimated to His disciples that one of the immediate forerunners of the end of the age would be *"the love of many waxing cold."*

Page 380 - Pastoral Epistles - The spirit of prophecy seems to have kept this fact constantly in evidence before the Apostolic generation. Paul reminded the Thessalonians that there would be a very visible apostasy before the *parousia*, in *"the latter days"* of the age. In 1 Tim 4.1-3 this apostasy is described in process as an invasion of Jewish Gnosticism, and in 6.20, 21, as a profane and babbling gnosis which had already made some to err. Then in the Second Epistle he refers again to this well known prophecy concerning *"the latter days"* (3.1-9). In this passage he is not prophesying of any distant future, but pointing out the very evident fulfillment of this latter-day prophecy going on before Timothy's eyes. The flood of error was in full spate, and those Gnostics who were *"ever learning"* from their intercourse with demons were gaining the ears of many for their marvellous revelations. That this apostasy was only a short sharp spell in *"the last days"* of the Judaic age, and no lingering decline within the Gospel age, as some will have it, is evident from verse 9: *"But they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be evident unto all men."* The Apostle hints that the providential judgements soon to break out will overtake many of these servants of the devil, and that Jerusalem's destruction will sufficiently demonstrate Christ's supremacy as the Saviour of the world.

Such is a brief vidimus of the more salient statements of St. Paul in his last Epistles. Surely the assertion that he latterly postponed the Second Advent, or lost his interest in the event, will not lift its face for a moment in view of this evidence to the contrary !

Page 381 - Pastoral Epistles - And yet the disappointing fact is before us that the great body of expositors assert that the Apostle latterly speaks of his death and of going to be with Christ in a manner that seems to contradict his early hopes of surviving till the *parousia* and of then being translated into the heavenly kingdom without tasting death.

ANONYMOUS.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

Page 382 - WE no sooner begin to read this grand Epistle than we discover the temporal standpoint of the author. God's message to men by His Son was spoken in *"the last of these days."* (1.1.) That is to say, the days then running were to this author part of a distinctive period near the end of which Christ appeared. Christ's life and death were not the initiation of a new age, but a sign of the end of the old. As Dr. Davidson says, *"this old age had not closed when the author wrote; it would close definitely when Christ should come again the second time (9.28). But in the minds of all the saints then living His second coming was imminent, and therefore His first manifestation is considered to mark the close of these days."* A similar note of time occurs in chap 9.26: *"at the end of the ages hath He been manifested."* All past time is considered as broken up into preliminary periods of graduated discipline, in preparation for the economy which is the culmination of God's purpose with humanity, and which is to have *"no end at all."* But Christ's earthly life is in the *"end"* of the last of these preliminary periods, not in the beginning of the newer age. The apostolic generation recognised that Christ had a work to do in the Heavens before the new age could be formally introduced. This was in harmony, too, with the teaching of Jewish Rabbis who spoke of *"the present age"* (*olam hadseh*), and of *"the age to come"* (*olam habba*), between which they sometimes placed the days of the Messiah, that is the period of His manifestation, and the time of the travail pangs of the age to come (Matt 24.8). We see then that the author regards his generation as living in troublous times — the death throes of one age, and the birth pangs of another which supplants it, and faces the Gentile as strenuously with its demands as it does the Jew.

Page 383 - The World to Come - Hence this writer will have much to say to us concerning *"the world to come."* In chap 2.6, he says, — *"the organised inhabitable about to come has not been subjected to angels."* He means that the divine government of the world about to be introduced is not, like the Mosaic government, *"ordained by angels."* (Acts 7.53; Gal 3.19.) The Son of God will be the only mediator, and in His hands all power and authority will be concentrated. This should make clear beyond all dispute that *"the age about to come"* means in this Epistle the Christian dispensation as displacing the then existing Judaistic age, when angels were the communicating media between God and men. Accordingly in 9.11 we read of *"the good things about to come"* which Christ is to introduce. Westcott and Hort reject the *"about to"*; but even if right, the *"good things"* are said to come as *"a time of reformation"* upon the abolition of the carnal ordinances of Judaism as no longer a part of the

divine government of the world. We see too that these **"good things "** are the opening up of the privileges of the Holy Place to God's believing people.

Page 384 - The Epistle to the Hebrews - Judaism was only the Outer Court, of which Christianity is the Holy Place — the dispensation of God's presence. But this privilege is not really open to men when the Epistle is written, because **" the first tabernacle is yet standing "** (8). The Temple's fall will be the providential sign that Heaven is opened to the saintly dead and that God has officially begun His new covenant reign amongst men.

The same immanence is re-asserted in chap 10.1 — **"The law having a shadow of the good things about to come."** These good things are — perfect cleansing from sin, great peace, a present near approach to God, and immediate entrance into Heaven at death. These came to men only in the divine government of the world by Christ. From this point of view, while Judaism was still in force Christians had only **" tasted the powers of the age about to come "** (6.5), and would have much larger privileges when the gospel age was authoritatively ushered in.

Indeed, it is a note of God's procedure that the present is always a foretaste of what is yet to come. The best wine is kept unto the last. What we enjoy now is the shadow of a coming substance, because under God we are always traveling towards the rising sun, and we meet the shadows before we touch the things themselves. In keeping with this idea of the changing dispensations, we naturally have a contrast between the local Jerusalem in which Judaism centred, and the Jerusalem which is from above. The passage is one of sterling eloquence, and is flashing with heavenly scintillations (12.18-24).

Page 385 - The City about to Come - Mount Zion is the spiritual height that stands over against Mount Sinai; the heavenly Jerusalem or gospel dispensation which comes down to earth, and brings God in Christ, innumerable hosts of angels, and the saints who have just entered into heaven with their perfect natures, into close and intimate communion with the Church on earth. In this sense, even we below are **"gathered together unto Christ "** — have entered into a fuller and more internal communion with the ever present Saviour. But we have to notice that this consummation was not then fully reached. **" We seek after the city which is about to come "** (13.14). The old Jerusalem was about to vanish and leave the New Jerusalem in its place. This latter was already constituted in its heavenly form. God had prepared for His Old Testament saints a city (11.16); but it was only prepared by Christ, for whose coming they had to wait. **"Apart from us Christians they could not be made perfect"** (11.40). They were still under the disabilities of sin, still partially in the grasp of

Death, until Christ had prepared a place in heaven, founded a heavenly city for their habitation, and raised them up into its glory.

Now, if we have interpreted rightly, we ought not only to hear of this blessed transformation scene, but to find it accomplished amid the thunder tones of judgement. And indeed the heavy tread of coming doom is heard echoing through the whole Epistle. *"To-day, if ye will hear His voice."* *"The rest of God "* is near. The forty years in the wilderness, corresponding with the forty years between the ascension and *parousia*, are now almost gone. The land so often watered, and bringing forth only thorns and thistles, is rejected and nigh unto a curse, and its end is to be burned (6.8). The Mosaic Covenant waxeth old and is nigh to vanishing (8.13).

Page 386 - The Epistle to the Hebrews - Christians must be increasingly faithful as they *"see the day approaching"* (10.22). Apostatizers have nothing to look forward to but *"a certain fearful expectation of judgement and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries."* *"Vengeance belongeth unto God. The Lord will judge His people."* Let Christ's people maintain their confidence.

*"For yet a very little while,
He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry"* (10.37).

Surely this is positive assertion, the frank committal of an inspired writer to the fact of an impending *parousia*. And indeed the quoted prophecy was fulfilled as certainly in its New Testament application as in its original application to the judgement of the Chaldeans. Christ did come to judge the world. His coming shook not only the earth but heaven, not only the political status of nations but the religious faiths of men, and gave us a new earth and new heaven. No thing, however, that was essential or spiritual in the former dispensation was destroyed. Christ came to fulfil the law, to preserve and beautify the Holy of Holies, and to cast down only the outer courts with their rudimentary religious observances, and jealous exclusion of Gentile men (12.27, compare Rev 11.2). Thus did God prove Himself to be a consuming fire; and introduce His Kingdom in its gospel form, as a Kingdom which cannot be shaken, the everlasting heritage of His Son (12.28).

These notes must have reminded the reader of how much there is in common between Hebrews and the Book of Revelation; and indeed renewed the reader's surprise at the perfect unity of teaching which exists between all the books of the New Testament.

Page 387 - The Agreement of Scripture - There is not so much as a divergent note, not one sign of reversed opinion. From Matthew to Revelation the Kingdom is about to come, the dead about to rise, and the judgement of two worlds to proceed. We also claim that these New

Testament predictions were most fully and literally realized in the world's history, so far as this earth was to be the scene of their fulfillment. Perhaps the Church's actual experience does not so well correspond as one might wish; but the fault lies in the Church's blindness and spiritual inaptitude. Neither were the spiritual anticipations of the Second Isaiah completely realized in the post exilic return. God always prophesies the ideal best, expresses the desires of His own tender love; but the fullness of blessing is attained by the Church only when she lives up to her ideal best. Man's irresponsiveness to the will of God always lessens, if it does not sometimes quite annul, the blessing which He is able and willing to impart.

It is difficult to realize, in face of this large array of positively uniform Scripture testimony as to the time and nature of the Second Advent, how the present belief of the Church can continue to exist. It is especially puzzling to understand the position of a rapidly increasing number of interpreters who read the Scriptures rightly as to the time of the Advent, and yet assert in one breath Apostolic inspiration and Apostolic failure to solve one of the simplest elements in the Advent problem. Those who try to save the authority of Scripture by interjecting a second and distant fulfillment on a larger scale cannot possibly succeed.

Page 388 - Conclusion - There is no *third advent* [Not so ! Ed PB Zech 14:1-6] in the New Testament not a single whisper [?] of a Coming distant from Apostolic days, not a sign of any *Parousia* that is not distinctly mixed up with the tragedy of Jerusalem's destruction. The proximate date and the whole historical environment are fixed for the beginning of the Christian dispensation. The plain truth must be told, expositors have turned Eastern poetry into Western prose, and carnalised the spiritual blessings of the Advent. Christendom has therefore remained as blind to the fulfillment of New Testament prophecy as the Jew did to the Old, has precisely repeated his mistake, and thereby justified his unbelief and postponed by centuries the time of Israel's conversion.

In conclusion, we thank every reader who has given us a patient consideration. We trust the views unfolded have been hurtful to none, if not profitable to all. The results to which we have sought to lead our readers are fitted to establish their faith in the harmony of the Holy Scriptures, their confidence in the continued conquest of the world by the preaching of the Word, and to calm their fears of either any cyclonic catastrophe happening on some near day to the world, or of some lingering and unhappy experiences for the Christian between death and glory. Christ is on His throne, claiming the kingdoms of this world, and making all things, even death itself, subservient to the final glory of those who love and serve Him. A few short years, and we shall realize how true

are all the teachings of His Word, and how certainly He has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers, and made their passage from grace to glory the happy transaction of a moment or the twinkling of an eye.

NOTE WORTHY FINDINGS

Page 389 - It may be well in closing this volume to bring into distinctive array the prominent findings of our finished research. These we doubt not will be disappointing, if judged from the standpoint of current beliefs in the Church; but we claim that the latter are groundless inventions, drawn from Scripture on principles that are violations of fair and candid exegesis, whereas the following positions are almost literally the verbal statements of the Word itself. Which is better, time will tell; but already we can venture to say that current methods of interpretation are condemned by their sadly disappointing results — dates minutely fixed, prophecies falsified, hopes deferred, new methods of interpretation invented to be falsified in turn, and, on the surface, the wildest liberties taken with the Sacred Word.

We submit the following as the teaching of Scripture:—

1. The Second Coming of Christ, **whatever it may mean**, is invariably **stated to be near, at hand**, within a generation at the most distant extreme. There is no change of language, no modification of this expectation, and the passages which seem to speak of delay declare that the apprehension of delay is a delusion which will speedily prove itself to have been mistaken.

Page 390 - Noteworthy Findings - 2. The coming of Christ is also the coming of the great God, and is equivalent to **the coming of the Kingdom** of Heaven, which is equivalent to the official initiation of Christ's authority, or the gospel age or dispensation.

3. The coming of Christ's Kingdom is the abolition of the Old Testament kingdom in its corrupted form — a spiritual *coup d'état* — a change of government, and a decentralisation of the seat of government in keeping with its higher spirituality and the extension of its area. The Kingdom is no longer subject unto angels, but entirely in the hands of the Son of God; and its earthly administration no longer confided to the hands of *Jews* but given very largely to the Gentiles, who thus come into **"the fullness"** of spiritual privilege.

4. The coming of Christ, as a process and event in time, is not so frequently in evidence as appears to an English reader. The Scriptures lay emphasis on the Lord's *parousia* or presence as an abiding possession rather than upon the dramatic episode of a temporal or local approach. For the apostolic generation, the *parousia* had a twofold sphere of manifestation — **first in the invisible, where Christ appeared**

personally and locally to His dead saints in order to exalt them to His glory; and secondly, in this world, personally but not visibly to flesh and blood, except in certain historical signs, and by an increase of power and life to His struggling church. All hope of a local and visible manifestation of Christ on earth is distinctly forbidden in the Scriptures; this is reserved for the risen and glorified Saints.

5. The presence of Christ has invariably as its sign, a visible judgement on the Jewish nation in its then existing generation.

Page 391 - Noteworthy Findings - The most evident sign of "*the end of the age*" and **the presence of Christ in His Kingdom was, as a matter of course, the demolition of the temple and such a treading down of Jerusalem** as made the restoration of temple worship an impossibility. The coming of the Son of Man in His Kingdom was visible only in this and *such* other natural indications as must necessarily accompany a change in the nature of the divine dispensation or spiritual economy of the world.

6. There is no prophecy in the New Testament of any catastrophe to the physical world in connection with Christ's coming. The "*end of the age*" is totally different from the modern phrase "*the end of the world.*" The convulsions which accompany the end are supposed to be physical only by the very blameable forgetfulness that social, political, and religious overthrow is invariably expressed in Hebrew literature by catastrophic images borrowed from the material world.

7. The Kingdom of Christ is ushered in by one of these revolutions, begins in catastrophe to the preexisting order, but itself knows no catastrophe. Of Christ's Kingdom there is no end. Once introduced it grows like the mustard seed, insinuates itself into the total mass like leaven, has incidental struggles with recrudescing or outlying heathenism (Rev 20.), but **in spite of occasional retrocessions is ever gaining ground amongst the human race, until at length it achieves a universal victory.** [This is evidently not true as the history of the 20th century indicates that evolution has now got people's minds in a vice like grip and the scriptures are considered to be of no account. Only by divine intervention can this be released. i.e the conversion of Israel - Ed PB]

Page 392 - Noteworthy Findings - 8. The coming of Christ is accompanied by a judgement of the dead as well as of the living'. It seems natural that when Christ assumes the government of the living human race, He should also assert His sovereignty over the race in spirit life. "*He is Lord of the living and the dead.*" His appearance is thus personal to the great majority of the race — the host of waiting souls in the unseen.

Thus He fulfils His promise — "*A little while and ye shall see me,*" and His appearance is a judgement, inasmuch as He raises His own out of Hades

into the place prepared in Heaven, while those left behind realise that they are permanently banished from His presence.

9. We have found, as might be expected, that from this first ascension of the dead onwards Christ's people no longer at death, pass downward into Hades. For those fully prepared, death is immediate transition from the church below to the church above. There is at the coming of Christ no such rapture of the living, unchanged by death, as has been so long and so constantly imagined; but from and after His coming, in the experience of death ripened saints are changed in a moment, caught up to meet the Lord; and at such a happy alteration in the order of death, well might the exclamation be heard in heaven and joyfully re-echoed on the earth — ***"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth."*** Thus death, the last enemy, is swallowed up in victory.

9. The resurrection for the Christian now consists in the spirit being clothed upon with a form from heaven, with superior essences that enable it to find its suitable environment in God's heaven. The soul thus clothed upon is not found naked in the article of death; that is, it is not rendered comparatively impotent or made to experience loss by the dissolution of the fleshly body.

Page 393 - Noteworthy Findings - On the contrary, when the consciousness awakes and finds itself centered in a heavenly body, its powers and its joys are enhanced, and by its superior organization it gravitates upwards into heaven. This tabernacle is the present creation of God's Spirit dwelling in us. We are not only sanctified but glorified here and now as we commune with Christ, by the inward operation of the Holy Ghost mystically transforming us into the likeness of the angels of God. To such a happy transformation few of us like Paul will be willing to believe we have yet attained, but if not perfected here we shall be perfected beyond, and in good time pass into the palace of the King, glorious without and within.

Such are the most notable findings of our enquiry. If in any of them we are mistaken, we shall be thankful to reviewer or reader who will take the pains to enlighten us. If these positions are scriptural, as we maintain, then we need not add a word as to the egregiously mistaken character of present-day expectations and beliefs. Like the Jews, we are looking for a Messiah who has come; a veil of the grossest ignorance is upon our eyes as we read the Scriptures, and as to all the future our darkness is very great. God grant that the clouds may soon be dissipated from the Church's sky, and the sun of truth shine out with the clearness of noon-day.

APPENDIX.

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Page 390 - WHAT impression did Apostolic teaching make upon those who immediately succeeded them as teachers and leaders; in the Church ? This question cannot fail to lie of interest to all seekers after the truth, although we do not. look to these successors as authoritative interpreters of Scripture, but only as to men who stood in very intimate relationship with the Apostles and were therefore in a fair position to understand what they had received from the founders of the Church.

We surely have good reason to conclude that the authoritative doctrine on this matter would be fairly apprehended, and taught with general accuracy. Corruptions are usually of slow and gradual growth; and to a careful student the joinings of the old stones with the new are always traceable. In the present case, however, where the truth is mainly as to simple concrete facts of time and place, beyond which Apostolic predictions of the second Advent rarely went, mistake was almost an impossibility. What then do we find was the view of the second Advent held by those sub-apostolic teachers whose literary remains have come down to us ?

CLEMENT OF ROME states in perhaps the earliest of these writings, at the latest sometime in Domitian's reign (but Hefele thinks; as early as 68 A.D.), that the Apostles went everywhere by Christ's command, teaching *"that the Kingdom of God is at hand,"* and himself asserts with confidence the immediate coming of the Lord, and an impending general resurrection and condemnation of the wicked. In the so called Second Epistle, which is really a homily, and may not be Clement's, he exhorts his readers to *"expect every hour the Kingdom of God,"* as they know indeed that *"the day of judgement cometh EVEN NOW as a burning oven."*

Page 395 - The Epistle of Barnabas - There is, however, a decided difference of tone between these two books as to the nature of the resurrection. In the epistle the resurrection is spiritual, a new life springing suddenly out of the dissolving flesh, while in the homily were told that the flesh itself will have an actual resurrection.

THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS is placed by Weizsacker, Lightfoot, and Ramsay, in the reign of Vespasian, by Renan in Nerva's reign, and by Crutwell anytime between 70 and 132 A.D. Here then we find ourselves still in the period covered by the Revelation of St. John. This writer regards himself as still living, like the Apostle ? in an *"evil age";* it is *"the last times,"* the *"consummation of trial according to Daniel is come,"* and there is need to look into *"the things which are near to come to pass,"* and

especially ***"the coming up of the little horn which plucks up three horns by the roots"*** — probably, as Renan suggests, a reference to the deposition of the Flavian dynasty (Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian,) by the succession of Nerva. God, he says, has not ***"suffered His people to be without understanding of those things which are to come."*** ***"The Son of Man is soon to come to judge both the quick and the dead."***

Saint and sinner shall see Christ in that day, but apparently the vision is after death in the spirit world; and so far as the Kingdom is realised on earth it is not ideally perfect, but has its ***"evil and filthy days,"*** amid which Christ's people shall be saved — probably an allusion to the invasion of the beloved city by the unbinding of Satan in Rev 20. Barnabas recognises this programme as already so far accomplished. For the Scripture saith, ***"and it shall come to pass in the last days, that the Lord will deliver up the sheep of His pasture, and their sheepfold and tower, to destruction. And it is come to pass as the Lord hath spoken."***

The Jews are forsaken because they put their trust in the Temple and not in the Lord Himself; and now God's temple is in His people's hearts. ***"The day is at hand when the lawless One will be destroyed. The Lord is near and His reward is with Him."*** It is evident that this writer seized clearly the distinctive difference between the old age and the new — the first as the dispensation of the Temple, and the second as the dispensation of the *parousia* or presence of God through Christ in His people's hearts.

Page 396 - The Epistle of Hermas - He is in fullest harmony with the conception of the Advent which we have found in the New Testament. For him the, first act of the drama is already finished in the fall of Judaism, and the second is in process (if being consummated by the destruction of pagan supremacy at the centre of the world.

THE PASTOR OF HERMAS is supposedly the production of A brother of Pius, Bishop of Rome, and like the foregoing works was long read in many churches as a portion of the Sacred Scriptures. Zahn and Salmon fix its origin for the year 96 or 97, Ramsay between 100 and 120, and no one will care to name a later date than Cruttwell's extreme point, 139 A.D. The book purports to be a revelation given to Henmas, an elder of the Church of Rome, in the reign of Domitian. When it touches on the second coming the language is strictly Scriptural. ***"Christ appeared in the last Lays in the fulness of time."***

The great tribulation is about to come, *seculum hoc per sanguinem et ignem deperire*; but this fiery destruction will only test and purify the saints. Although this dissolution is not at all material he uses the usual Apocalyptic image — the heavens, the mountains, the seas are removed; and the structure which displaces Jerusalem is a tower into which faithful

Christians are built as stones, as in the Apocalyptic letters they are made pillars in the Temple of God. This Temple is then almost entirely built. The nearness of the judgement of the Roman world in Domitian's days is frequently insisted on. The end will soon be accomplished (*cito consummabitur*), and the Appeal is strenuously made — ***"give heed to the judgement that is about to come upon you."***

SEVEN EPISTLES OF IGNATIUS now hold the field as genuine. This father is said to have been a disciple of St. John, and wrote his letters in 108 or 109, just before his martyrdom at Rome. In a letter to the Ephesians he reminds them that ***"it, is the last time,"*** and calls upon them ***"to fear the impending wrath,"*** at the same time remembering that for the Church the powers of the devil are destroyed, and their mischief dissolved by the unity of Christian faith — which reminds us of the binding of Satan in the Apocalypse, and the flood of watery heresies by which he attempts to destroy the Church. Ignatius seems to have had most happy views of the Christian's state in death and his own immediate prospects.

Page 397 - The Epistle of Ignatius - The prophets who had been eagerly waiting in Hades for the coming of Christ, ***"had been raised up from the dead."*** If this be indeed ***"the first resurrection,"*** which takes place ***"at His coming"*** according to St. Paul, then we should expect Ignatius to believe that death to the Christian is from that point forward, immediate entrance on the presence of God. And as such he regarded it. His own approaching passage through death is ***"a rising again to God"***; if his martyrdom is prevented he is ***"hindered from living,"*** his death is ***"entering into pure light,"*** where being come he is indeed ***"a man of God,"*** — as if only full born or come into complete adoption by his upstanding from the dead. (*Cf. Rom 8.21-23.*)

In keeping with this, Ignatius says that the gospel dispensation is ***"the completion of immortality,"*** an evident reference to the fact we have found in Scripture that the gospel age is initiated with a resurrection and entrance upon the heavenly life. Ignatius also seems to have been strong in his grasp of St. Paul's resurrection process as begun in the present life, so that Christians are found at death more or less clothed upon with their heavenly body. Refuting Docetism, he says to the Smyrnaeans that as these heretics believed in a bodiless Christ, so would it appropriately happen to themselves at death, ***"when being divested of the body they shall be bodiless and demoniac."***

This was the condition which was believed to overtake all the dead, whether Jews or heathens, and of which Paul expresses dread. The same view of death is also found in **THE ACTS OF ANDREW**, considered by some as belonging to the Apostolic age. The Devil eagerly keeps men

captive so that when they die they shall be naked, while Christ renews the soul with a glorious and immortal form, and at death it is found clothed upon. The same Pauline view of resurrection is found fully expressed in **THE ACTS OR PHILIP**, where the Apostle in the act of dying prays to Christ: — "*Put on me Thy glorious robe and seal of light, transforming the form of my body into angelic glory, so THAT I SHALL RISE AND MEET THEE IN THE AIR.*"

POLYCARP HAS AN EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS in which there is a slight departure from the New Testament meaning of "the age about to come." With him it appears to exclude all reference to the age of grace on earth, and to be confined to the unseen kingdom into which the Philippians will be raised and reign with Christ.

Page 398 - Sub-Apostolic Religious Literature - He writes in the belief that at death this is an immediate experience, for those Christians already dead have *gone "to the place that was due to them from the Lord,"*— being a reminiscence of "*they rest from their labours and their works do follow them.*"

The above may suffice as illustrations of the teaching which immediately succeeded that of our canonical books. While no doubt grossly materialistic views of the second Advent were in circulation from the earliest times, it is pleasing to find that the leading teachers of the Church retained the spiritual teaching of the Master and His Apostles. The harmony is not perfectly exact, but it is sufficiently striking. Indeed, all the earlier literature is saturated with references which show that, the Scriptures were interpreted by the sub-apostolic generation in substantial harmony with the views unfolded in this work, only as might be expected with an occasional touch of grossness.

Simon Magus and other magical heresiarchs like him are pointed out as Anti-christ and the incarnation of the Devil; Domitian and other Emperors are said to be warned that St. John and other teachers are spreading the report, that Rome is to be quickly rooted out and the empire broken; destruction and perdition are swiftly coming upon society, the world is near its end, the demons of the temples are already bound in chains. Both Jewish and Christian Sibylline poems are fiery with the imagery of the Apocalypse, all interpreted of Rome, which is called Babylon, and threatened with speedy destruction—evidencing that in those days there prevailed that view of the Messianic kingdom which we have found in the Sacred Books.

As time advances, error creeps in in the carnal guise which it takes on in the writings of Papias and Justin Martyr. The falseness comes from a growing inability to interpret writings that were essentially Hebrew in spirit

and structure, and a rigid fixing of them into the formal exactness of Greek and Latin thought. As Renan truly says, in Hebrew thought and language everything is black or white, sunshine or darkness, set down "***in a just proportion of materialism and spirituality, or rather an indescribable confusion of soul and sense, making that adorable language the very synonym of poetry, the pure vestment of the moral idea.***"

Page 399 - Degradation of the Doctrine - When the apocalyptic teaching came into the custody of Greek and Latin speaking men, it was materialised and even sensualised, until in two generations the current doctrine of the second Advent was a thing to be ashamed of. And such are the views which for the most part have continued among students of prophecy, the earthly and sensual showing the greatest fitness for survival, although they have never been able to justify themselves from Scripture without resort to artificial methods of interpretation far from complimentary to the Sacred Word they professed to interpret. We who have come into a purer light owe a debt of gratitude to those who have pioneered the way back for us to the highly spiritual and comforting doctrine of our Lord and His Apostles. In no field more than in that of Eschatology is there need for the cry — "***Back to Christ,***" and in none is the cry as yet so much a faint voice in the unheeding wilderness.

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