

By the same Author:

THE HISTORIES AND PROPHECIES OF
DANIEL

FIRSTBORN SONS, THEIR RIGHTS AND
RISKS

J. C. AROOLAPPEN, THE HISTORY AND
DIARIES OF AN INDIAN CHRISTIAN

Also

MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT AND
THE MYSTERIES AND CATHOLICISM.

By G. H. Pember, M.A., edited by G. H.
Lang

(See advertisements at end)

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

SELECT STUDIES

BY
G. H. LANG

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASV, American Standard Version.
AV, Authorized Version.
BkD, The Book of the Dead, trans. Budge.
Charles, R. H., *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*.
Deissmann or LvO, Adolph Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, ed. 4
(*Light from the East*).
Govett, R., *The Apocalypse Expounded*.
Her., Herodotus.
LvO, see Deissmann.
NT, New Testament.
OT, Old Testament.
RV, Revised Version.
Swete, H. B., *The Apocalypse of St. John*, ed. 2.
VGT, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*.

The contracted forms of the names of the books of the Bible will be readily grasped. Gn for Genesis, Ex Exodus, Lv Leviticus, Nm Numbers, Dt Deuteronomy, Jh Joshua, Jg Judges, Sm Samuel, Kn Kings, Ch Chronicles, Ez Ezra, Es Esther, Jb Job, Ps Psalms, Pv Proverbs, Ec Ecclesiastes, Is Isaiah, Jr Jeremiah, Lm Lamentations, Ek Ezekiel, Dn Daniel, Hs Hosea, Jl Joel, Am Amos, Mc Micah, Na Nahum, Hk Habakkuk, Zp Zephaniah, Hg Haggai, Zh Zechariah, Ml Malachi, Mt Matthew, Mk Mark, Lk Luke, Jn John, Ac Acts, Rm Romans, Cr Corinthians, Gl Galatians, Eph Ephesians, Ph Philippians, Cl Colossians, Th Thessalonians, Tm Timothy, Tt Titus, Pm Philemon, Hb Hebrews, Js James, Pt Peter, Jd Jude, Rv Revelation.

SOUND EXEGESIS OF INDIVIDUAL PASSAGES IS THE FOUNDATION
OF DOCTRINE.

C. F. HOGG.

FOREWORD

To his exposition of the Book of *Daniel*, published four years ago, Mr. Lang has now added one of the Book of *Revelation*; and it is a pleasure to commend this work to the Christian public as I did the earlier.

Mr. Lang does not concern himself with critical questions, although he makes it clear that he (rightly, I have no doubt) accepts the ancient and well-attested ascription of *Revelation* to John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee. Nor is he concerned with the question whether *Revelation* with its symbolism and world-outlook commends itself to the mind of the twentieth century. If it does not, we need not jump to the conclusion that the fault lies with *Revelation*! But he does painstakingly set himself to make plain the meaning which these visions were intended to convey, and the moral and spiritual lessons which readers of the twentieth century as well as of the first may learn from them.

No two expositors of *Revelation* will see eye to eye on every detail of interpretation, and if I began to study the book intensively with a view to writing a commentary, no doubt I might in several respects arrive at results differing from those set forth in the present work. But I am heartily at one with Mr. Lang on the fundamental principle that the true interpretation of *Revelation* is the eschatological one. This is commonly acknowledged by unbiased modern scholarship, and it was the earliest interpretation current in the Church. But it did not meet with the approval of the great philosopher-theologians of Alexandria and elsewhere, who set the tone for the allegorical exegesis which was followed for many centuries. In particular, the literal understanding of the millennium of the twentieth chapter was a rock of offence to them. To quote R. H. Charles: "The earliest expounders of the Apocalypse, such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenæus, Hippolytus, and Victorinus, quite rightly take the words in a literal sense of an actual reign of Christ with the glorified martyrs on earth. The spiritualizing method which emanated from Alexandria put an end to all trustworthy exegesis of the Apocalypse. . . . The meaning assigned by the votaries of this method became wholly arbitrary, and every student found in the Apocalypse what he wished to find" (*The Revelation of St. John*, ii, p. 185).

It is sometimes suggested that the introduction of the "futurist" interpretation was the work of Jesuits. No doubt Ribeira and

other Jesuit scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were glad to counter the Protestant exegesis which identified Antichrist with the Papacy ; but what they did was not to invent a new exegesis, but to re-publish the primitive one, in as far, at least, as the scheme was futuristic.

By the eschatological interpretation of the Apocalypse is meant the view which envisages John as primarily concerned with the End of the Age, the Day of the Lord, to which, indeed, according to the interpretation of Rev. i. 10 in the following pages, he was projected in spirit, and from the standpoint of which he speaks. Some commentators have regarded it as an error in John's forecast of the future that he expected the final consummation to follow immediately on the crisis of his own day. But to speak thus is to overlook the genius of apocalyptic, to forget what Delitzsch called " the foreshortening of the prophetic horizon." This foreshortening is no more a defect in apocalyptic than it is a defect in a telescope that it makes distant objects appear near at hand. John, standing amid the crisis of his own day, sees all the tendencies inherent in that crisis as they come to a head on the eve of Christ's Parousia, which is revealed as the cataclysmic solvent of the otherwise insoluble contradictions of the human situation. Intervening events are lost to view, although it is only natural that the moral principles unfolded in this divine philosophy of history should be exemplified time and again in the age-long tension between the Church and the World. But this is a very different thing from the attempt to find in *Revelation* a detailed outline of the course of Church History ; such attempts have too often brought into disrepute not only this type of exegesis, but all exegesis of the book, and even the book itself.

To Mr. Lang not only the general tendency of *Revelation* as a whole, but every part of it, has a meaning and a message as an integral part of " God's Word written " ; and this meaning and message he has patiently sought out for himself and committed to writing for others. For this written ministry we do well to be grateful, and differences of judgment on details of interpretation should not prevent our learning from these studies some more of those things which in the Visions of Patmos the Spirit is still saying to the Churches.

F. F. BRUCE.

The University, Leeds.

December 1944.

PREFACE

My book *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel* brought requests for a treatise on *Revelation*. In fact, this had been long commenced. It must be thirty years since the first section of this book to be written was finished. There is a reason why this was c. V on the Four and Twenty Elders. Perhaps fifty-three years ago a cousin and I had discussed who these elders might be. We had never heard any other view than that they represent glorified saints, and that two youths should decide in favour of the only idea they had was no wonder. Later reflection taught me that I was wrong ; but the incident shows how early in life the *Revelation* attracted my mind.

In the year 1898, a London minister, since widely known and read, contributed to *The Christian* a series of papers. I was a young man of only twenty-three, and therefore, of course, was very well informed ; so I pointed out some matters in which the minister was in error. I had not then heard the sensible words of a bishop to his clergy : Remember, brethren, that none of you is infallible, not even the youngest of you. Even bishops say wise things at times ; which narrow-minded persons, who read only the literature of their own little circle; may note to advantage.

The minister sent a gracious reply, thanked me for the tone of my letter, and made these, to me, at that time, startling assertions :

... so far as the Church, that is, the Body of Christ, is concerned, I am at perfect agreement with you. I do not, however, believe that all Christians form part of that Body of Christ. The parable of the Virgins occurs to my mind ; neither the wise nor foolish virgins fo. med the bride, and even though five were not admitted to the marriage ceremony, they certainly were not typical of the lost world ; they were virgins though neglectfully they had allowed their supply of oil to run out.

The most popular scheme of prophetic interpretation on futurist lines, that which asserts that the whole church, living and dead, will be removed to heaven before the End Times, may, I suppose, be best studied in William Kelly's *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*. It was issued in 1861, but had appeared previously in *The Bible Treasury* for 1858 and 1859. But I have three insignificant looking little books which are earlier. They are : *Notes on the Book of Revelation* ; to assist Inquirers in searching

into that Book, London, 1839. *Notes on The Apocalypse. Gleaned at Lectures in Geneva in 1843. Seven Lectures on the Prophetical Addresses to the Seven Churches, delivered in London in 1852.* These are by J. N. Darby. They lie behind Kelly's learned elaboration of Darby's scheme. For I suppose that scheme, at least as a scheme, can claim no more ancient source than that active and fertile mind.

With those views, and with those alone, my mind had been nurtured and saturated from infancy ; hence the shock I received from the minister's statement quoted. It was some long time before I came to see that there was ground for his opinion as to the body of Christ ; but I very soon saw he was right as to the foolish virgins not representing lost sinners. This was the commencement of an honest and independent testing of *all* I held, and, after forty-five years, some results down to date are offered to the reader of this present book. It may at least be said that I have not, as have some, hurried to set forth newly adopted opinions.

That same year, 1898, and the next year, were momentous in my spiritual development and education. The Father of mercies, in love and wisdom, moved His child into a higher class and set more advanced lessons. They proved harder but more profitable. I shall mention only one matter. It occurred to me that, though I had been reading the Bible since I had read anything, I had perchance not read the whole of it, and that there might be things which my God and Father wished me to know which I had not read. I was living in lodgings, having breakfast and tea alone, before and after office. I took a Revised Version, and in five months read it from Genesis to Revelation at those two meals. I did not stop to puzzle over the very many things I did not understand, but read steadily on to make sure that the whole Book should be read. Three striking benefits accrued.

1. I discovered at once the *immeasurable* superiority of the RV over the AV for the understanding of the mind of the Spirit.

2. I gained a bird's eye view of the history and prospects of the human race from God's point of view ; and I was impressed by the much that He does not mention upon which man's histories enlarge, and much that He enlarges upon that human histories do not mention.

3. When I reached I Cr 2. 12 and read : "But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God ; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God," I was mightily encouraged by thus learning that the

divine Author of the divine text Book was present with me for the very purpose that I might get to know the things of God, even His *deep* things (ver. 10). There could be nothing in the Book that He could not explain: it was simply a question of capacity, diligence, and teachableness on my side. It is from that hour that I date any advance in knowledge.

The mature reader may wonder at the introduction of these reminiscences into a commentary; but I hope in God that some who may be suffering from spiritual growing pains and who, though thirsting for knowledge, are finding both practical and doctrinal lessons severe, may be encouraged to trust their education and training wholly to the same Father of mercies, and may not be discouraged though there are, as the Word itself allows, some things hard to be understood. The Spirit is a perfect Teacher.

Incidentally, I reflected that, should I continue to read OT and NT straight on, I should be an unduly long time without reading the latter, the former being so much the longer. This seemed undesirable, seeing that the NT is more particularly addressed to Christians. To correct this I commenced to read a portion from each Testament daily, still consecutively. This has been maintained ever since (in addition to topical and other studies), and I have felt no need of any other scheme of Bible reading, nor do I know any other of equal profit. At that time I knew nothing of any language but English.

This leads on to the remark that the present book is written by a student, not by a scholar, nor therefore for scholars in particular. Being well-assured that God has enlightened many besides myself, I have used many books, and to advantage. The learned may therefore wonder at there being few quotations. There are three reasons: first, economy of space; then, that what is here advanced may be considered on its merits without the influence of great names; lastly, because many, perhaps most, of the explanations distinctive of this treatise have not been learned from books. It must be added that the book and its writer are deeply indebted for valuable criticisms and suggestions to two scholarly brethren, Mr. F. F. Bruce and Mr. H. L. Ellison. But this does not pledge them to my distinctive views.

The reader is not likely to make much of this book unless he is in agreement with the writer on two antecedent and fundamental questions. This is not the place fully to discuss them, but they must be set forth.

i. That all statements, spoken or written, inspired by God,

and recorded in the Bible, were inspired as to their *words*. Peter (II Ep 1. 21) declares that “no prophecy ever was brought [i.e., into the mind or utterance of the prophet] by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved [borne along *φερόμενοι*] by the Holy Spirit.” Now to speak is to express thought in *words*. If the words be not exact the speech will be inaccurate. The plain force of Peter’s statement is that in the utterance of prophecy an extraneous power, the Spirit of prophecy, took up the mental and vocal faculties of the prophet, carried his mind along and through him uttered the words of the prophecy. This will apply to all those thousands of statements in OT prefaced by “Jehovah said,” “Hear the word of Jehovah,” and the like expressions. Thus of one prophet the Lord Jesus said: “How then doth David *in spirit* call Him [Messiah] Lord” (Mt 22, 43); that is, David was lifted up and carried along in a spiritual ecstasy. So the last but one of OT prophets said of all preceding prophets that they spake “*words* which Jehovah of hosts had sent by *His Spirit*” (Zh 7. 12). It was on this very account that the wrath of God flamed forth upon those who refused to obey. Similarly, in the Corinthian passage above mentioned, Paul stated that he spake “*not in words* which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which *the Spirit* teacheth” (I Cr 2. 13). This is a precise denial by the apostle of the idea that, while God gave to prophets general teaching of great thoughts, they were left to put these into their own words as able.

These men were not discussing a theory but describing an experience. It is more reasonable to accept their account of the inspiration that they knew personally than the speculations, centuries later, of theorists who have no experience.

Therefore, holding the conviction that the words of the Word are of God, we search into the most minute elements of the things written, bow to and believe every statement, and do not allow that the human element undoubtedly present intruded error into the utterances.

2. This book is written by one who is thoroughly persuaded that the teaching of Scripture is that no justified and regenerate person can ever be finally lost. Devout and learned men have held the opposite; and they support that view by many solemn passages, such as Jn 15, Hb 6, and others. In my *Firstborn Sons, Their Rights and Risks*, I have endeavoured to show that these portions of the Word are harmonious with the belief that no person once saved can be lost eternally, but that they do contain a searching warning message to the child of God, especially as regards the millennial kingdom. It is upon this line that some

parts of *Revelation* are here expounded ; but I must ask once for all that the reader, when he comes to these passages, will remember that it has been here avowed in advance that salvation from the lake of fire, once secured by faith in the precious blood of Christ, is unforfeitable.

The present work covers indeed the whole *Revelation*, but deals with it in sections. It is a series of Select Studies, and therefore is not a verse by verse, line by line commentary. In consequence, many details are not touched. Yet all details have been considered, for as one figure omitted or misread will falsify a calculation, so will one detail vary an interpretation. But the special purposes for which this book is designed did not admit of every detail being treated.

These main purposes are three.

1. To emphasize the personal and moral lessons of *Revelation*, so as to promote saintly living by saints. This is as truly a major end of prophecy as of history and doctrine.

2. To elucidate the sequence of the visions. I am at the farthest remove from those who say that no sequence is discoverable or was intended. Such do but declare their own incompetence for dealing with the book. Sequence is shown everywhere. The great use of *ordinal* numbers declares this : first, second, third, etc., are terms of sequence. The frequent use of such expressions as "*after this*," "*after these things*," "*another angel*," is to the same effect. They intimate *succession* of events. An internal sequence is discoverable in the several series of visions, as well as in their relations as series. Any book is worth while if it is helpful on this matter only.

3. The third chief end is to exhibit more clearly and fully the meaning of the visions themselves, and so to give, if possible, a larger and more distinct picture of the End Time of this age of human history, which, as the Rabbis well said, will be the birth-pangs of the days of Messiah.

No reader will be so conscious as the writer of the insufficiency of the book to serve these ends. But it is hoped that, by the grace of the blessed Spirit of truth, these pages may give light to the open eye, food to the hungry soul, vigour to the spirit, courage to the dispirited, warning to the self-confident.

Above all may fellowship of heart be promoted with Him to whom the Father of glory imparted this Revelation, that He in turn might impart it to the lowly of heart, His slaves. If writer and reader shall secure the blessing pronounced upon those who

read, who hear, who keep the words of this prophecy, then the Son of God shall be glorified by this exposition. To this end it is humbly dedicated to Him and offered to my brethren.

In quotations the Revised Version is generally used. Slight variations may have resulted from the American Standard Version having been sometimes at hand.

In quotations, matter in square brackets is mine.

G. H. LANG.

May, 1945.

PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION—I

ON SYMBOLIC AND LITERAL LANGUAGE

To employ figurative speech is a native characteristic of the human mind. It is more marked in some minds than in others, and in some races than in others. The oriental is very prone to it, the westerner less and less so, a result perhaps of the mechanical and mathematical habit of mind induced by modern industry and science. It is a regrettable loss, and especially it disenables the ordinary westerner from penetrating easily into the deeper and higher truths taught in the Bible, this Book being pre-eminently oriental in style and tone, and beautiful by reason of its richness in figurative language. It is highly needful that the western mind should immerse itself in the Bible manner of speech, and endeavour resolutely to form the habit of thinking pictorially. The book of *Proverbs* greatly aids this, and the book of the *Revelation* demands it.

As to the *Revelation*, two extreme lines of interpretation are known. The one regards the book as wholly or almost wholly symbolical, with but a minimum of literal statement: the other demands that every statement be taken literally that can be so taken.

The former view has led one to say that the *Apocalypse* is frankly and entirely a book of symbols, being sacred symbolism from first to last. Manifestly, this is exaggeration concerning a book the chief persons and places of which are literal. God, Jesus Christ, the Spirit; Michael and Satan; angels and men; are not symbols but actual persons. So are the chief regions and places mentioned actual. Heaven, earth, the sea, the abyss, mountains, islands, rivers, seas, are realities. The "city where also their Lord was crucified" was as real as the Lord who was crucified there. A Roman legion was quartered there at the time John wrote. Babylon also was standing, as were the seven cities to which the seven Letters were sent. The churches of believers in those seven cities were realities.

On the other hand, as we proceed we shall see that an extreme literalism creates its needless perplexities by laying down the rule of interpretation that a statement must be taken literally unless a positive absurdity results.

Neither view allows for the feature that a statement may be

strictly literal, yet may be made not at all to set out the literal fact stated, but because of some unmentioned fact or truth which corresponds to the one stated, but which the reader is to discover by reflection. Nor does either view conform to the persistent feature of language to *interweave* the figurative and the literal.

Of the former feature a converted Moslem gave a good example. He was interpreting into Arabic what I was saying to another Moslem. After the way of life had been made plain I asked him to say that now it was for the other to believe upon the Son of God and be saved or to reject Him and be lost. There was no alternative. We were at the top of a four-storey dwelling. He spoke for a few minutes and then said to me : I have told him there are two ways of getting out of this house ; he can go down the staircase or throw himself out of the window : it must be one or the other. The statement was literal as to fact, figurative in sense.

Ec 10. 8 is a good OT example : " Whoso breaketh through a fence a serpent shall bite him." In hot and sandy places in the East this is so well known that the Wise Man could scarcely need to state it. " Tell not as new what everybody knows." He must have mentioned it for the sake of some unstated lesson ; that is, the statement is literal, but there is a hidden lesson, and so it is figurative in sense. " Thou shalt not eat of it " was a fence around the tree in Eden : in the very act of breaking through it by disobeying, Adam and Eve were instantly infected with the moral virus of the ancient Serpent, the fatal principle of rebellion.

The *Revelation* offers numberless examples of this feature. The book is composed mainly of descriptions of things which John literally saw and heard in vision. In this sense it is literal. Thus in c. 6. 5, 6 we read : " And I saw, and behold, a black horse ; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, a choenix of wheat for a denarius, and three choenixes of barley for a denarius ; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not." This was something mental that John saw and heard, and was a subjective reality. But it is for the Spirit-taught judgment to consider whether the coming objective reality will be an actual black horse, with a rider holding a pair of scales ; and whether an actual voice will announce the exact ancient coin mentioned as price of the exact ancient measures of grain specified ; and whether the rider will be told in words that the oil and the wine are not to be hurt. With many others, we take it that what John did literally see and hear in vision has the undeclared meaning of a period of severe scarcity.

Of the latter feature mentioned, the interweaving of the literal and figurative, c. 9. 1, 2 may serve as illustration. "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss. And he opened the pit of the abyss." (1) The angel was literal. It is certain from places too numerous to cite that such beings exist and act in the judgments of God on the earth: but the "trumpet" we think symbolic of a type of action. See on the 7 Trumpets, p. 163. (2) The heaven was literal: the "star" is a well-known symbol of heavenly rulers (Nm 24. 17 : Is 14. 12 : Rv 12. 4). (3) A "star fallen from heaven to earth" is symbolic of a downfall of a heavenly ruler from a place of authority and glory formerly held in the upper world (Ek 28. 14-16 : Lk 10. 18 : Rv 12. 7-12); heaven and earth are literal regions. (4) The Abyss is a literal locality, as well known to Scripture as are heaven and earth. That there is one particular shaft leading to it we think symbolic, intimating that access to and egress from the Abyss are possible. (5) The "key" that opens this "shaft" must be symbolic of power to afford that egress, for that the "key" is a symbol, not actual, is clear from it being given to a "star," since a literal star cannot handle a literal key; which confirms that the "star" is a symbol. Similarly, a "star" using a "key" to open a "shaft" requires that the last be symbolic. But on the other hand, the feature of beings in the Abyss being released is literal, as will be shown in its place. See pp. 172, 270 ff.

If both symbolists and literalists complain that this manner of treatment allows of uncertainty of meaning and latitude for fanciful and divergent interpretations, it must be answered that their lines of treatment also admit of uncertainty and conflict, for at least the reasonable of both systems admit that *some* things are literal and *some* figurative. It is only a question of degree.

The numbers employed in the *Revelation* conform to the same feature: some are literal, some symbolic, some both, and spiritual discernment is demanded. But some writers treat all numbers as symbolic, while others insist on treating as many as possible as literal.

The numbers found are as follows: 1, 2, 3, 3½, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 24, 42, 144, 666, 1000, 1260, 1600, 7000, 12000, 144000, 100 million, 200 million. The predominant number is 7, which occurs 54 times.

The first number used is both literal and figurative: "the seven churches which are in Asia" (1. 4). There existed then the seven churches in the seven towns named in ver. 11. But we

shall see reason to regard them as symbolizing together the whole of the churches of God throughout this period of the church.

In the second place where a number comes (it is the same verse, and the same number, seven) the number is plainly symbolic only : "the seven spirits which are before God's throne." This can mean only the Spirit of God himself, for it were sheer blasphemy to insert created beings between the Father and the Son as the joint author of grace and peace. The Coptic liturgy does thus intrude Mary between the Father and the Son as a conjoint object of worship ; but to John such impiety was impossible. This usage confirms that the sense of divine perfection attaches to the number seven.

It is along this line that figures of speech and numbers are treated in this present book, and, allowing for difficulty in some cases, yet in the majority of instances there are indications to guide as to how to take the statements. For example ; that in the place cited above "seven spirits" is a symbolic number, does not require that the same number shall be symbolic in 8. 2, "the seven angels that stand before God," because if there be introduced here the idea of completeness of representation it will mean that the whole host of angels is in view, individuality will be lost, and the whole scene be confounded.

Again, when we read of "a throne set in heaven, and One sitting upon the throne" (4. 2), the number *one* (which must be supplied in English) must needs be literal, meaning God the Father, seeing that the Son, pictured as the Lamb, is brought before Him (5. 6, 7). But the one throne and the one Person being literal, consistency will require that the accompanying number 24 will be literal, and mean 24 thrones and 24 persons each occupying a throne. This is made more sure by 7. 13, where one of the 24 speaks as an individual to John as an individual. See c. V, p. 124.

Controversy has arisen over the higher numbers, especially and particularly over 144,000. Perhaps it is here that least difficulty ought to be felt, for the general habit of the human mind is to use high figures indefinitely. Of a mighty concourse one might say that "thousands and thousands," or "myriads and myriads" were present. It is thus that these expressions are used of the hosts of angels before the throne (5. 11). When we read in I Ch 21. 5 that "all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and a hundred thousand men that drew sword, and Judah was four hundred, three score and ten thousand men that drew sword," we feel that such figures are round numbers, not precise ; approximate truly, but not strictly exact ; just as we should still

say that a Field-marshall had a million men under his command. It was thus when John (9. 16) heard the number of the demon hosts as "twice ten thousand times ten thousand" (200,000,000).

This measure of indefiniteness may attach to small numbers also. When it is stated that "a tenth part of the city fell," who will insist on a given number of square yards an exact tenth of the total area? Equally so, the item that follows immediately (11. 13), "there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand men," will be a general, not an exact number. Such terms are thus less precise than the rigid literalist will insist, yet are not so indefinite as the symbolist thinks when he gives them merely a loose general sense of "greatness." They are *approximate*; a tenth part approximately: approximately 7000. No one, of course, will say that the Almighty *could* not cause an earthquake to throw down *precisely* a tenth part of a city and leave *precisely* nine-tenths standing, yard for yard, or that He could not effect the death of exactly 7000 men; but that is not the way that human language is ordinarily used by man or by God.

When numbers both exact and varying are given, as in both of the numberings of the tribes of Israel by Moses (Nm cs. 1 and 26), we are bound to take them as exact; but when of the same twelve tribes we read (Rv 7. 1-8) of precisely the same numbers from each, 12,000, the circumstance is so eminently unnatural as at once to suggest round numbers given for some spiritual lesson. And this supposition is intensified when exactly the same grand total, 144,000, is given a second time of a distinct company of persons (14. 1-5). It is easy to believe that some moral feature, indicated by a symbolic number, attaches to both companies: it requires no ordinary effort to believe that the number of both companies will prove to be precisely the same, and exactly 144,000. If it be not easy to settle what that moral feature is, this ignorance does not compel that the number *must* be literal. That the one number is sub-divided into twelve parts suggests that the tribal divisions of the literal Israel will continue at the period in view: that the other company is not so sub-divided, but remains one unbroken total, not only intimates that the companies are not the same, but also that the latter is then one undivided circle, a corporate unity, not a composite unity as Israel.

Reverting to smaller numbers; were a historian to say that a third part of the people of the land died of a pestilence, no one would turn up the census figure for that year, divide by three, and insist that precisely the number gained, neither one more nor one less, had thus died. So when we read that "there died the third part of the creatures that were in the sea and

the third part of the ships were destroyed" (8. 9); or in 9. 18 "the third part of men were killed"; or in 8. 7 "the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees"; the term "third" is similarly approximate.

It is also to be observed that the figure *hyperbole* (overstatement) is used to emphasize an idea. At the beginning of the present discussion it has been said that "the *Revelation* offers *numberless* examples" of a certain feature; but, of course, strictly it would be possible to count the exact number of these examples. This usage is found at 7. 9, "a great multitude which no man could number." Yet no crowd can be actually innumerable. John heard the number of a different host given as two hundred millions (9. 16), and this other multitude could hardly be as many as that, for Christ's people in this age are a "little flock," an insignificant minority of mankind. The company in question is only one section of the believers of this age, a section from only one brief period, the Tribulation of the End Days. The statement is hyperbolical, and means that, as John ran his eye over the throng, it was so vast that no estimate of its number could be formed. This is in contrast to the immediately preceding feature that the number of each tribe of Israel had been announced. As then, the one statement means that the one company is so great as to be beyond estimate, so the other, by exact numeration, is shown to be limited and small. This forbids the proposed identification of the two visions as different views of one set of persons. The comparatively small fixed number of each tribe expresses symbolically what the prophet expressed literally, that the spared of Israel at that End Day will be a "very small remnant" (Is 1. 9). Each tribe being named will show that each and all will share equally in the severe reduction in numbers, and yet that each will be equally represented in that remnant, and the whole nation be united. It is the principle laid down in a quite different manner in Zh 12. 7, that no one part of the nation shall glory over the rest.

From this it is seen that *twelve* is a number of earthly completeness, and also that in this place it is both literal and symbolic, the twelve tribes being the literal number, but 12,000 being symbolic. This may teach also that the plans of God never finally fail, and that as He saw fit that the Jewish race should spring from twelve patriarchs, and saw good that this twelve-fold unity should persist of old, so will He cause it to reappear at the End, and will nullify the much and positive talk about the ten tribes having been "lost" and the mischievous theorizing that has been built thereon.

Where necessary, within the limited scope of this treatise, we shall give our view of other symbols and numbers as we meet them. It is enough here to indicate that no rigid uniform rule can be laid down to govern interpretation. Doubtless it is safer to incline rather to a literal than a figurative sense, but always with the large reserve and latitude that human speech is a *blend* of direct and symbolic language. And for the right comprehension of Holy Scripture the devout have the special advantage of the Spirit who inspired the Book being with them to open the mind to its meaning ; yet ever remembering that the thoughts of His infinite mind were caused to pass through human minds, and to find expression in modes of utterance native to that vehicle.

PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION—II

DID THE APOSTLES EXPECT THE RETURN OF CHRIST IN THEIR TIME ?

Something less than twenty years after the ascension of the Lord, about A.D. 51, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians and said : “ We that are alive, that are left unto the parousia of the Lord, etc.” On the strength of this it has been asserted that “ the writers [of the NT] have most pointedly and specifically identified themselves with the living ” at the parousia, and the question of our title is held to require an affirmative answer. But this depends upon the sense here of the “ we,” “ we that are alive.”

The usage of “ we ” and “ ye ” does not amount to proof : it might mean this ; it may not.

1. Nm 15. 2. At Kadesh Barnea (c. 14) Israel refused to advance, and were, as to the 600,000 men of war, sentenced not to enter Canaan. The very next thing recorded as said to the nation was, “ When *ye* are come into the land.” This pronoun could not and did not cover the 600,000, though including them grammatically.

2. Dt 11. 7. At the close of the desert wanderings Moses said to the nation, “ *your* eyes have seen all the great work of Jehovah which He did.” This included His works in Egypt and on Pharaoh, for these are named (ver. 3, 4). Yet the majority listening had been born subsequent to the leaving Egypt.

3. Jg 2. 10, 1. All who had come out of Egypt had died, yet the angel of Jehovah said to the nation, “ I made *you* to go up out of Egypt.”

4. Is 64. Speaking for the godly remnant to come in the last days, the prophet cries for God to come down, to melt the mountains, etc. (1, 2). He glances at the far past, when God did come down and Sinai quaked, and says (3), "when Thou didst terrible things which *we* looked not for," though neither he nor those for whom he speaks had been at Sinai.

5. Dn 9. 5, 6. The godly prophet says, "We have sinned, have dealt perversely, have done wickedly, have rebelled, have turned aside from Thy precepts, etc.," though c. 1. 4-8 show that from his youth Daniel personally had lived quite the reverse of this.

6. Tt 3. 3. Similarly, Paul says, "we also aforetime were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, etc.," though he himself had not so lived, for he says that from his forefathers he had served God with a pure conscience (II Tm 1. 3, and see Ac 23. 1 and Ph 3. 6). While these statements do not mean that he had been sinless, they do forbid that he had been characterized by disobedience and given up to lusts and pleasures.

7. Rm 6. When Paul (1) says, "Shall *we* continue in sin?" he does not intend that he personally had any such idea. When he adds (8), "if *we* died with Christ," he is not raising a doubt as to himself, for he *had been* crucified with Christ and *had died* with Him as an accepted and experienced reality (Gl 2. 19, 20; 6. 14).

8. Ac 6. 14. The accusers of Stephen speak of "the customs which Moses delivered unto *us*," though they lived fifteen centuries after Moses.

9. Ac 7. 38. So also Stephen speaks of Moses having "received living oracles to give unto *us*."

10. II Cr 4. 14. Still more decisively as to the point in hand, Paul himself said to the Corinthians that "God shall raise up *us* also with Jesus, and shall present us with you." What other meaning *can* this have than that Paul expected to die and be raised? Had he, then, changed his mind since he wrote to the Thessalonians five years earlier? If so, which of his expectations was from God? and, if so, what becomes of his inspiration and his authority as a teacher?

It is a common usage of "we" and the like pronouns that the speaker thereby merely associates himself with the race, society, or class of which he is a member. Thus: "I cannot promise myself to be present, but I propose to the club that *we* join in this celebration." Or an Englishman may say even now, "We won Trafalgar and Waterloo and overthrew Napoleon." Or

again : " It is suggested that all of our number who live in that locality muster in force, so that *we* may be well represented." The first two instances exclude the speakers, the third leaves a doubt as to this. Or again : " When there arises a combination of the central European powers *we* must stand alone or count upon the U.S.A." This could not be pressed as proof that the speaker confidently expected to be alive and witness the supposed event.

" We that are alive, that are left unto the parousia," can fairly mean no more than, " those of the Christian society that shall be alive at the parousia."

But more definitely. The positive proof that Paul did *not* contemplate himself living in the parousia is of great weight.

I. I Th 5. 1. " But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that ought to be written unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." The " but " of ver. 1 (*ότε de*) links that paragraph with the preceding. It is a conjunctive particle superadding somewhat to that which has preceded, not a disjunctive particle separating the clauses. And there is no antecedent to " times and seasons " other than the parousia just mentioned. " But concerning the times and the seasons " for what ? The only answer is, For the events immediately before stated. In the same way the *γάρ gar* " For " connects ver. 2 with ver. 1, as the *ότε de* of ver. 1 connects with c. 4 : " You have no need that ought to be written unto you as to the times and the seasons, *for* as to them you know that the day of the Lord so cometh, etc." The argument contained in the *gar* simply prohibits the taking the " day of the Lord " as a new subject to which he now turns. It does not need to be said that the chapter divisions are of no authority. Here the division is most misleading. It should have come at ver. 13 of c. 4.

The events just mentioned, the parousia, resurrection, and rapture, are therefore connected with the day of the Lord, and as to the times and the seasons for them Paul had already, when with them, given instruction.

The second, and quickly following, letter (c. 2. 1, 2) similarly joins the parousia, our gathering together with Christ, and the day of the Lord, and most expressly warns them against the notion that that day of the Lord had already set in, for it could not do so until certain events had occurred and the Lawless One had been revealed. He was reminding them with emphasis not to expect the parousia, our gathering together, or the day of the

Lord before these events. He considered such a false expectation as a beguilement, and hints that there were spirits, as well as men, who would seek the deception of saints upon this point.

The AV rendering of *ὑπέρ huper* "I beseech you *by* the parousia, etc.," is incorrect and misleading. It makes the parousia and the gathering of the saints a *ground* for the appeal that they be not shaken in mind, and seems to disconnect those events from the day of the Lord. Of the some 160 places where the word is found it is not once elsewhere rendered *by*, and it is a force the word does not have. This is one instance from many of how the AV prevents the reader from accurate knowledge in prophetic study. The RV "We beseech you *touching* the parousia," with its margin "Gr. in behalf of," i.e. in reference to, connects the parousia and the gathering with the day of the Lord, the former being events to take place within that Day. For this meaning of *huper* comp. Rm 9. 27 : II Cr 8. 23 ; 12. 8.

Now whoever will visualize the tremendous series of world events that the prophets and the Lord foretold as to lead up to the Day of the Lord must surely pause before asserting that Paul considered that they might commence and be completed within his lifetime, or rather in that shorter portion that he could expect when writing to the Thessalonians. Only ten years later he spoke of himself as aged (Pm 9). There was no sign of them in the year A.D. 52 when he was writing.

The attempt to break this argument by asserting that Paul is not here speaking of the parousia at the Day of the Lord, but of a previous and secret parousia only revealed to him when he was writing to the Thessalonians, and not made known before, is inadmissible, being without evidence or reason in support, contrary to these passages and all passages. The definite article in II Th 2. 1, "touching *the* parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ," shows that Paul knew of only one parousia, the one when we shall be gathered unto Him, therefore the one mentioned in the former letter, c. 4; and the contexts in both letters prove this to be connected with the Day of the Lord. Scripture knows of no previous parousia or descent of Christ from the throne of God, as far as we can find. He is to sit there till the time for the subjugation of His enemies. The suggestion in question requires Him to leave the throne and come down to the air before that subjugation is to commence, indeed, before the greatest of all His enemies, the Beast, has even come on the scene. We shall revert to this point in para. 5 below.

Details will compel and confirm this idea of Paul's attitude and

will show that he could not, at the time he wrote, have been expecting a near return of Christ.

1. Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed, and the Jewish people scattered, as the Lord had expressly predicted, nor in the fact was this fulfilled for nearly twenty years, not until after Paul's death.

2. Peter was not yet dead, nor yet old (Jn 21. 18, 19). It is assumed here that he was about the same age as His Master when he was called by Him. Both events had to take place, as all the brethren knew. It was in *this* expectation, not in that of the return of Christ in his life, that Peter lived. The Lord had said unto him, "when thou shalt be old another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not." John understood this to "signify the manner of death by which Peter should glorify God." Over thirty years later than Christ spoke Peter wrote: "I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you by putting you in remembrance; knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me" (II Pt 1. 13, 14). What Christ had signified, therefore, was what John understood, Peter's death, not any spiritual experience, as has been fancifully suggested, but "the putting off of his tabernacle," which he at once turns into its literal sense by adding, "Yea, I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able *after my decease* to call these things to remembrance."

3. Five or six years later than when he wrote to the Thessalonians Paul was a prisoner in Jerusalem, and received from the Lord, present in person, the specific announcement, "Be of good cheer: for as thou hast testified concerning Me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Ac 23. 11). Three reflections arise. (a) That Paul could not thenceforth expect the parousia until, at the earliest, after he should have testified at Rome. This rules out an "at any moment" expectation during that period. (b) That it was not possible that the glorified Lord should have earlier created in him an expectation that was not to be fulfilled and which He now annulled. (c) That the notion that the apostle and the apostles had in fact taught a possible return of the Lord at any time implies that on this subject they had not been instructed by the Spirit of Truth. But admission of error on this so important part of their message will challenge their teaching and authority in general. Opponents of their doctrines and of the plenary inspiration of Scripture have taken due advantage of this admission, and no exegetical "explanations" can turn the edge of their sword. It is impossible to regard men

as divinely inspired teachers of pure unmixed truth if they did in fact entertain a false expectation upon this major theme of their Master's return, upon which they themselves laid so great stress, and caused the whole church to adopt the mistaken idea and be disappointed.

4. When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians the gospel had reached but a small portion of even the Roman world and it had to be taken to the whole earth. The thought must not be confined to that invention of prophetic students "the Roman earth" or "the prophetic earth." Great territories were known to exist that Rome never touched. The indefinitely vast region known as Scythia was quite unexplored, as well as the Germanic lands. Persia, India, and west China (Sinim, Is 49. 12) are mentioned even in OT, as well as the nearer, though distant region, "the uttermost parts of the north," and Spain is mentioned in NT. The good news had to be taken to the whole creation, for the church was to include some from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. Under the then conditions of travel it can scarcely be thought a physical possibility that one generation of Christians should have accomplished this herculean task. Even the most strenuous, unremitting labours of Paul himself, continued for fifteen years when he wrote to the Thessalonians, had covered but a small central area of the Roman empire. That was an unparalleled feat, yet the immensely greater and harder part of the task remained; harder because the further one went from Roman civilization and its roads the slower and more severe did travel become. There is no evidence that in apostolic times the gospel was carried further west than Rome,¹ further north than Dalmatia (West Yugoslavia), further east than the Euphrates, further south than Ethiopia.

5. Those who maintain that we ought to be expecting the parousia momentarily, because, as they say, the apostles did so, commonly assert that the supposed secret rapture they teach was revealed for the first time when Paul was writing his first letter to the Thessalonians. They are obliged so to assert for, as has always been admitted, it is plain that the OT and the Gospels speak only of the coming of Christ in glory. This admission involves that when present at Thessalonica Paul *could* only have spoken of the latter event, the coming in glory, no other coming or rapture having been revealed until later, i.e., when he wrote to them. Yet, as seen above, his second letter (2. 1, 5) shows incontrovertibly that when with them he had told

¹ It is very uncertain whether Paul reached Spain (Rm 15. 28), and that Galatia in II Tm 4. 9 means Gaul is even more doubtful.

them of "the parousia of the Lord," our gathering together unto Him, and the Day of the Lord: "Remember ye not that when I was with you I told you *these things*?"

Therefore, as the secret rapture, prior to the rise of the Lawless One, had not been revealed when Paul was with them (as we wholly agree), that parousia and gathering to the Lord of which he did speak at that time cannot have been this alleged secret coming and rapture, for these, as the theory owns, had not then been revealed. It could only have been that parousia and gathering of which Christ had spoken (Mt 24. 29-31), and which were to follow next after the tribulation of those Latter Days, for no other coming and gathering had been made known. And the reason is, that there is to be no other coming of Christ than that of which He himself spoke. Of this Paul himself is a witness in chief, for he has declared with the utmost preciseness that "the blessed hope" of the church is "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tt 2. 13), and not any prior and secret event. See later under *prosdechomai*, p. 35.

It cannot be alleged that when with them he had indeed spoken of the same coming and gathering as taught by Christ, but that now, in his first letter, he was bringing before them something fresh, for the first letter shows (5. 1, 2) and the second letter distinctly asserts (2. 5) that he was reminding them of the very things he had told them by word of mouth.

If any disputant will now give up the assertion in question, and, changing ground, will say that the secret coming *was* revealed before Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, it will be his duty to prove this by Scripture, which, as far as we know, cannot be done nor has been attempted.

Thus the facts as to Paul are, that about A.D. 50 or 51 he was teaching at Thessalonica that the apostasy must come before the return of the Lord and our gathering together unto Him: that shortly after, when writing his letters to that city, he repeated the same things: that five or six years later he wrote to the Corinthians about his being raised from the dead to be presented with them before the Lord: that within two years thereafter he was explicitly told by the Lord that he would live to testify at Rome: that perhaps nine years later he wrote to Timothy that his death was now at hand, and gave him instructions as to continuing the teaching by passing on to other faithful men what he had heard from himself (II Tm 4. 6; 2. 2).

Thus his attitude was exactly that of Peter, contemplating death and taking steps to perpetuate the testimony after his

departure. It is impossible to thrust into this consistent attitude and teaching the notion, so contradictory and dislocating, that when he wrote the first letter to the Thessalonians he set forth a new scheme as to the parousia never heard of before and never mentioned again. The other great passage on resurrection and rapture (I Cr 15. 50-58) contains not a word that requires its fulfilment before the Tribulation, but the references to the last trump and the swallowing up of death in victory connect most naturally with Rv 11. 15-18 and Hs 13. 14, both dealing with the Day of the Lord at the end of the Tribulation. See c. VII. The same is true of I Th 4. 13-18. Taken by itself it can be as well put after the Antichrist period as before, for it gives no hint either way ; but taken in its proper connection with the paragraph next following, it agrees with the Corinthian passage as to this point. But deprive the theory of a secret, any moment rapture of these two scriptures and it really has nothing left.

6. The apostolic outlook was of necessity conditioned by the statements the Lord made to them (1) that he was going on a long journey ("a man going into a far country," Lk 19. 12), and (2) it would be only "after a long time" that the Master of the house would return (Mt 25. 19) : and (3) His further statement a few weeks later, noticed above, extended that "long time" until at least Peter should have grown old and have died a violent death (Jn 21. 18-23). The first of these statements was made in public ; the second to four apostles, of whom Peter was one (Mk 13. 3) ; the last "went forth (*ἐξῆλθεν εἰς*) among the brethren," i.e., passed beyond the seven present (ver. 2) to the brethren generally.

It is therefore beyond credence that only a few weeks later Peter was publicly assuring the Jewish people that, if only they as a nation would repent, Christ would then and there return. This is an impossible sense to import into his words in Ac 3. 19-21. He knew from the Lord's own words that the nation would *not* repent, but was rejected, and that their city would be destroyed and themselves dispersed. The sense imposed upon what he here said throws it into disharmony with his appeal in the preceding chapter : "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (2. 40), the contrary idea to that of the generation being saved.

But in fact Peter's words in c. 3 carry the refutation of this misleading notion. He declared that "the heavens must receive [Messiah] until the times of the restitution of all things whereof God spake by the mouth of all His holy prophets from of old" (*ἀν' αἰώνος*). Thus Peter asserts that the whole of those mighty

world changes of which OT so largely speaks must take place in connection with the return of Christ, and he would know that they could not be condensed into a brief time, but would take years to complete. The last "week" of Daniel 9 alone would require seven years.

7. In connection with the prediction of Peter's death, and in answer to a question by Peter as to what awaited John, the Lord said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" The disciples then showed they were like disciples are to-day, quick carelessly to read into words what was not said. They took these words to mean that John would not die, but should live till the Lord should come again. Late in life John took pains to correct this false notion, pointing out that Christ had not said that, thus hinting incidentally that words must be construed strictly, not be taken loosely. The fact that this mistaken expectation was held concerning one particular believer shows that it was not held concerning all believers. If it had been the expectation that all believers might live to the return of Christ, no special word would have been needed to create that expectation as to one of them. But the emphasis in the Greek makes clear that the notion was based on that special saying and was confined to John: "Went out therefore this the word (*οὗτος ὁ λόγος*) among the brethren that *that* disciple would not die" (*ὅ μαθητὴς ἔκεινος*).

8. Further, the Lord's definite assertions quoted, that His absence would be lengthy, must be remembered steadily when the sense is sought of His earlier statements that His followers are to be like unto men waiting for their Lord. It were grievous irreverence to suppose that at first He created an assumption that He had afterwards to correct. Yet to this there is no alternative if it be held that His earlier teaching had meant that the apostles and their contemporaries were to expect His return in the near future.

One of the earliest of these sayings is typical of others (Lk 12. 35-40): "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning: and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their Lord, when he shall return from the marriage feast; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto Him."

The very picture employed forbids that the servants should imagine that their Master might return "at any moment" or without notice. They were too well acquainted with the bustle and excitement attending an eastern marriage procession to gather the notion that it might arrive and no one know it was near, *if he was awake*. Thus in the parable of the virgins a "cry"

went forth "Behold, the bridegroom"; and in the same discourse it was said, "When ye see all these things know ye that He is nigh" (Mt 24. 33). Thus the Lord's teaching was ever consistent; nor can it be said that this does not refer to the coming for the church, for the warning to the church at Sardis is to the same effect, implying that the watchful will know when the hour has come, while the unwatchful will in no wise know: "If therefore thou shalt *not* watch I will come as a thief, and thou shalt in no wise know (*οὐ μη*) what hour I will come upon thee" (Rv 3. 3).

Moreover, (1) the servants knew that the bridegroom had to go to the house of the bride's father; that there the customary ceremonies and festivities (usually protracted affairs) had to be accomplished; and that the return journey had to be made. (2) The picture implied that therefore they need not expect him during the first watch of the night (6 to 9 p.m.) of which Christ made no mention; and it was left open *if* it might be in the second watch (9 to 12 p.m.), or whether it might not be till the third (12 to 3 a.m.). (3) In the explication of this parable the Lord contemplated the business of His house going on so long that a good servant might degenerate into a bad one; for he says "My lord delayeth his coming," which it would not occur to any one to say until some considerable lapse of time after the master had left and beyond the full time when he might have returned. The good servant turning from his fidelity is the clear force of what is said. It is only when he starts to entertain the notion of the delay of his lord that he "begins" his misconduct, which means that up till then he had done his duty. The pronoun "*that* evil servant" is emphatic: "if *that* evil servant (*ὁ δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος*)" requires an antecedent. *What* evil servant? and no other person has been mentioned than the good servant. The Lord might have said, If *an* evil servant, or If *any* evil servant: but He did not so speak.

On a later occasion (Lk 17. 20), answering a question as to when "the kingdom of God cometh," the Lord confirmed the instruction by the remark that God is *longsuffering* as to His chosen ones (Lk 18. 7), that is, *waits long* before He avenges them. Though when at length He does this He acts speedily. This expression "speedily" (*ἐν τάχει en tachei*), set here in connection with the coming of the Son of Man, is to be noted. It plainly means quick action after long waiting; "He is longsuffering over them." This is to be remembered when the same term is used in the same connection in Rv 1. 1, "things which must *shortly* come to pass," i.e., "things which in their entirety

must be done *with speed*" (see Alford and Pember). And so again in Rv 22. 12, "Behold, I come *quickly*."

These remarks apply to the parables in Mt 24 and 25. In Mt 13 a series of parables had already indicated developments and changes to go on throughout this present age, from the time when the Son of Man began sowing the good seed until the harvest, which latter would be when the Son of Man should send forth His angels at the consummation of the age (49). All that then was intimated had to come to pass before that consummation and harvest could come; and so later, in Mt 24. 14, it was repeated that the gospel had to be taken to the whole world, and many other mighty events come to pass, before the Son of Man would send forth those angels. It was in the light of His prior instruction that the Lord repeated the call and warning as to the servants of His household *watching* as men ready for their lord, and the watching required cannot nullify the earlier instruction that many things would take place before He would come.

The parable of the ten virgins as distinctly implied a lengthy absence as did the parable from Lk 12 considered above. The bridegroom has gone to fetch the bride, and he is away so long that the virgins pass the interval sleeping. This is followed by a further picture of the household during the Master's absence (Mt 25. 14), which ends only after "a long time." It is to be observed how frequently this figure of the "house" is employed, and in passages regularly to do with the coming of the Son of *Man*. As to what is the "house" during the absence of the Lord there can be no question. The later NT writings settle this. The "house of God" is the "church of the living God" (I Tm 3. 15: etc., etc.). So that the house, the church, is to continue on earth until the coming of the Son of *Man*, that coming of which His parables speak, which indeed is the only future coming known to Scripture.

9. We pass now to expressions which some think to be inconsistent with this view of NT.

The terms "wait for," "look for," "expect," do not in themselves carry the force of momentary expectation, but are used of events known to be distant and to take place after other events to precede.

(i) *Ekdechomai* is used (a) of the man at the pool *waiting for* the moving of the water (Jn 5. 3). This took place *κατὰ καιρόν* (*kata kairon*), which term in Rm 5. 6 means at a certain due season. Taking this sense here, the man, as soon as the water

had been moved, knew that he must wait for the next due season. (b) Of Paul *waiting for* fellow-workers, though his messengers to them had to go 200 miles, and they that distance to come (Ac 17. 16). (c) Of Paul *expecting* Timothy, though he did not then know his whereabouts or route : “*if* Timothy come” (I Cr 16. 10, 11). (d) Of the husbandman *waiting for* harvest, which might be a year off, and certainly could not be expected, “*at any moment*” (Js 5. 7). (e) Of Abraham *looking for* the heavenly city, though he saw it only from afar (Hb 11. 10). (f) Of Christ *expecting* till His enemies be put under His feet (Hb 10. 13). This is His present attitude. It will not be asserted that in heavenly glory *He* has any misapprehension as to the nearness of the event, and it never ought to have been suggested that on earth He spoke so equivocally that His apostles gained, or could have gained, a misapprehension with which to mislead His whole church. (g) Even the one instance of the word “*wait* one for another” at the table of the Lord (I Cr 11. 33), indicates that the idea of quiet waiting, not of momentary receiving, is in the word, since those having arrived first would not know how long it might be until all would have assembled and the meal commence. Ancient folk were not sticklers for punctuality.

(2) *Apekdechomai*, the intensive form, is used (a) of the creation *waiting for* the revealing of the sons of God (Rm 8. 19); yet this is unintelligent waiting, since the creation cannot enter consciously into the plans of God, which shows that no “any moment” attitude is necessary to the word. (b) And even when used of the believer *waiting for* the redemption of the body (Rm 8. 23), it is (c) then at once shown (ver. 25) that it is a *patient* waiting, as for something that is not expected instantly. (d) It is therefore in this sense of patience of hope that (e) “*we wait for* a Saviour” (Ph 3. 20), that (f) He will be manifested to them that *wait for* Him (Hb 9. 28), and (g) that the apostles *waited for* His coming (I Cr 1. 7), and (g) for the hope of righteousness (Gl 5. 8). The force of this word lies in the intensity of the longing, and this is not dependent upon brevity of interval.

(3) *Prosdokao* is another cognate. It is used of Peter looking for events so admittedly far distant as the parousia of the Day of God and the coming of the new heavens and earth, which are to be later than the millennial era itself (II Pt 3. 12-14).

The derivative *prosdokia* comes only twice. (a) The Jews were *expecting* Herod to execute Peter (Ac 12. 11), but they could not know just what day the king would fix, whether near or later. (b) In the last days men’s hearts will be failing for fear and for *expectation* of what terrors the future may hold (Lk 21. 26); but

again the fear is undefined as to the precise events or the time for their occurrence. It is this very vagueness which causes and aggravates the fear.

(4) *Prosdechomai*. The same sense attaches to this word. So much of uncertainty may lie in it that it is used (*a*) of men *looking for* a promise of which it is quite uncertain whether it will be given at all, that of the chief captain to bring Paul before the council (Ac 23. 21). Then it is used (*b*) of Simeon *looking for* the consolation of Israel (Lk 2. 25), of other godly Jews *looking for* the redemption of Jerusalem (Lk 2. 38), and of Joseph of Arimathea *looking for* the kingdom of God (Mk 15. 43 : Lk 23. 51). It is clear that none of these expected these things to take place "at any moment," especially not Joseph as he buried the dead body of the Hope of Israel. (*c*) It is therefore in this sense of entire indefiniteness of time that the word should be understood in Jd 21 that we are to be "*looking for* the mercy of [the coming of] our Lord Jesus Christ" and in Lk 12. 36, to be "*like unto* men *looking for* their lord's return from the marriage feast." As before remarked, they knew that some fair interval must elapse between his departure and his return.

It is both certain and significant that Paul so employed the word, and indicates that his attitude was as here shown, for he says that the Christian is to be "*looking for* the blessed hope and [even the, or, which is the] appearing of the glory of the great God our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tt 2. 13). The grammar simply forbids the common but erroneous notion that the "blessed hope" is a first event and the "appearing" a later. Alford remarks: "Hope and appearing belong together." So Bloomfield, Weymouth, Conybeare, and many others. But inasmuch as the appearing of the glory is (as all admit) to be at the close of the Tribulation, Paul was expecting, looking for, an event which he knew and taught must be preceded by earlier events.

It is thus clear that this word, like its cognates, is used of events that are known to be distant and may be preceded by other expected occurrences, so that the sense of immediacy is no necessary part of their NT meaning. They deny any validity to the assertion that one cannot be looking for an event if he thinks that other events may first occur, as that one cannot be looking for Christ if he thinks that Antichrist must come first. In the NT sense of these words one *can* be so looking for Christ, and very many have been and are thus looking for Him. What is positively contrary to NT facts and usage is that the apostles were looking for Him in *any other* manner. Linking, as before noticed, the parousia of Christ, our gathering unto Him, and

His Day, Paul has most categorically affirmed that "it will not be except the apostasy come first and the man of lawlessness be revealed" and that any other notion is a deception (II Th 2. 1-3). It will not be affirmed that no one looks for, waits for, expects, new heavens and earth because we all expect other events first.

10. It has been shown that "I come quickly" does not mean soon, but swiftly. Difficulty, however, is felt by some with such statements as "Yet a very little while the Coming One shall come, and will not tarry" (Hb 10. 37). It is urged that such phrases would not have been used by men who did not expect the event shortly, and they are made a basis for the charge that the apostles taught their converts an outlook which time falsified. Yet moderate attention to the facts of Scripture usage would avoid this misconception.

(1) Hk 2. 3 is similar. "The vision is yet for the appointed time and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay." "The end" is to be when "Jehovah is in His holy temple" and "all the earth [is to] keep silence before Him" (ver. 20). Under Seal 6 this will be shown to mean the Day of the Lord. The vision is pictured as a runner panting as he nears the goal. Yet time is implied in the words "though it tarry." The words "it will not delay" explain the "He will not tarry" of Hb 10. 37. There is only delay or tarrying if the person lingers beyond the appointed time for moving. In Mt 25. 5 the translation "while the bridegroom tarried," though the same word as in Hb 10, is misleading, for there would be no set hour for the cessation of the festivities at the bride's house and so no tarrying. The sense is: "As the bridegroom did not come for some long time"; and this gave occasion for the virgins to slumber. Thus this parable, like others, suggested some lengthy absence of Christ.

(2) Many centuries earlier than Habakkuk Moses had sung of Israel's "end" (Dt 32. 20), even their "latter end" (ver. 29), and had said: "the day of their calamity is *at hand*, and the things that are to come upon them shall *make haste*," which is at once connected with their final restoration (35 and ff.). Thus in Bible language "at hand" may mean three and a half millenniums later and "make haste" means a quick work once it has commenced.

(3) Again, Isaiah (56. 1), speaking of the still future day of Messiah, said: "Thus saith Jehovah . . . My salvation is *near to come*," yet we still await it.

God speaks from His own standpoint and outlook, and measures distance by His own standards, not by man's. It is for us

reverently to habituate our thinking to His, not to reduce His conceptions to our measures. A strong man might point to his homestead across the valley, and say, We shall soon be there, but his weary little boy might think the walk very long. It is strictly in this connection that Peter says that the Lord is not careless as to His promise to return, and that we are not to forget that God's unit of time measurement is not a day but a millennium of years. From His standpoint His salvation for Israel was near at the time of Isaiah, only two or three of *His* days off. Lowth would translate "is to come" by "is just ready," with which may be compared Peter's word that our salvation is "*ready* to be revealed," but will be revealed only "in the last time" (I Pt 1. 5).

(4) Speaking of the overthrow of "the terrible one," Antichrist, and the salvation of Judah and Palestine, Isaiah had said earlier (29. 15-24) : "Is it not yet *a very little while*, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field?" Here is found the very expression in Hb 10. 37.

It will be shown shortly that there is another view-point (a human, as the foregoing is the divine) from which these phrases may be regarded, each view being consistent with the other.

The conceptions of Scripture are everywhere consistent, and the expressions of them also ; but the force of the words must be gained from Scripture itself, not from inexact colloquial English usage. Yet even if the strict force of the English terms *expect*, *look for*, *wait for*, be observed, it can be seen that these, as surely as the Greek words they translate, do not necessarily require *immediacy* as part of their meaning, but are equally proper when a lengthy interval may be in question. From the hour that a husband leaves his home on a lengthy foreign journey his wife will expect, look for, wait for his return. Indeed, waiting of necessity implies *some* lapse of time in which to wait ; looking for a person implies that he is not yet in sight ; expecting an event implies no more than that it *will* take place. Such expressions will be equally applicable if it is known that the time is near, or distant, or is quite undetermined.

The other term to be examined is *gregoreo*, usually rendered *watch*. It comes from *egeiro*, to rouse from sleep, to cause to rise up ; hence, to live (I Th 5. 10) ; then, to be awake, and hence to *watch*. It is found first at Mt 24. 42 : "Watch therefore ; for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh." This follows an intimation that the parousia of the Son of Man will be as it was in the days of Noah and the coming of the Flood. For that dread

event Noah surely waited and watched in faith, though he knew it was not to come until after he had built and stored the ark, and his family and the beasts should have been gathered therein. Here is a scriptural picture of watching ; it means to be thoroughly alive to a situation and taking all measures required in the light of what is expected.

This last thought is the essence of the Biblical idea of watching. It means exactly the reverse of so regarding an event that one does nothing, but lapses into inactivity. Said the humorous Spurgeon : Ye men of Plymouth, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven ? This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go : *get on with your work !* In truth, the Christians in view have not much deserved the sly hit, for they have not failed in Christian service ; but the remark illustrates the true manner of watching for the Lord. Hence, in His parables we find that, at the same time that the porter is to watch, all are to be busy : some in supplying the household with food at regular times (Mt 24. 45) ; others in trading with their lord's money (pounds and talents) during his absence ; others in strengthening the things that remain of His affairs that were entrusted to them, but which are ready to die (Rv 3. 2). All such working supposes some duration in the absence of the Lord in which it can be performed. Lk 12. 38, 39, which pictures the disciple like a man watching against a thief, follows immediately the intimation that the lord of the house might not come till the second or even the third watch of the night. The later figure of the morning star extends this intimation of delay, for that star does not rise until the *last* watch, somewhat before dawn.

The faithful wife, by nurturing constant desire of heart for her husband's return, and by caring well for his house and interests while he is away, will be more truly "watching" for him than if she sat at a window all day gazing down the street. Her heart would ceaselessly watch, that is, be alive to his return, looking for it, longing for it, even though she knew much must transpire ere he could return from a distant land.

That about the year A.D. 30 Christ did not intend His followers so to watch as if He might return very shortly may be inferred from the fact that sixty years later He was still exhorting His people to watch (Rv 3. 2 ; 6. 15).

One other consideration is important and illuminating. Prophetic utterance was often ecstatic, the speaker, as to his consciousness, being transported from his own place and time into the realm and period concerning which he prophesied. The

very first prophetic utterance given through a man demonstrates this. Enoch spoke of the coming of the Lord as if he had seen it happen, saying, "The Lord *came* with ten thousands of His holy ones" (Jd 14). Similarly the last prophet says: "I became in spirit in the Day of the Lord" (Rv 1. 10). Hence the descriptions he sometimes gives of events as having taken place, for they had done so in vision before his consciousness. An elder says to him: "These are they who *are coming* out of the Tribulation," as if they were watching the procession in motion (7. 14): and later, great voices proclaim that "the kingdom of the world *became* the kingdom of our Lord" (11. 15). It is in keeping with this that God himself, to Whom the future is as the present, speaks of His salvation as near, and that in a *very little while* Christ shall come. More will be said on this aspect later.

The assertion that the Lord taught the apostles, and they their converts, that His return might be in that generation carries serious and destructive implications. Time quickly and completely falsified the notion. So, then, either:

1. The Lord misled them and they the church, in which case the modernistic challenge of their and His authority is justified. But more. The Lord declared that "as the *Father* taught Me, I speak . . . I spake not from Myself, but the *Father* who sent Me He hath given Me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak" (Jn 8. 28; 12. 49; 14. 10). He further said that it would be thus with the Spirit of truth also: He too would not "speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear shall He speak: and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (Jn 16. 13). The misleading therefore upon this weighty matter of prophecy must be attributed finally to God the Father; the Son and the Spirit and the diciples being all misled. But this being impossible, no such teaching can have been given. Therefore:

2. Neither the words of the Lord nor of the apostles carry the sense supposed, but their meaning was everywhere consistent with what God knew the facts would be. If the present discussion contributes in any measure to the demonstrating of this it will be of value. That the prophecies of the Bible always find exact fulfilment is a chief and self-employed evidence of its truth and of its being from God. Yet some who glory in this as to the OT have laboured a scheme of interpretation which falsifies it as to the NT, by maintaining that Christ and His apostles encouraged a hope which failed utterly. These are among the wounds which He receives in the house of His lovers.

Note. The opinion, expounded in this commentary, that there is to be a removal of watchful believers prior to the End Days does not conflict with what is above maintained, that the Lord will not leave the throne of the Father and come to the air till the close of the reign of Antichrist. For the Lord will not come for those thus removed: they will simply be caught away as were Enoch and Elijah.

But this removal of the watchful of the days in question, though deeply important for its bearing on the conscience and life, will affect only a very small minority of the church of God, and is exegetically but subordinate to the main prophetic programme of the End Times.

PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION—III

THE LATTER DAYS ARE THE CHIEF PERIOD OF PROPHECY

It is a constant feature of prophetic scripture that they pass direct from the day of the prophet to the closing days of this present age, even to the era of Antichrist and the coming of Christ. The first of all predictions reveals this feature and gives character to the rest.

Gn 3. 15. There is first intimated this salient feature of human history: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.” The essential feature of at least six thousand years is thus summarized in a sentence, and the forecast leaps on at once to the second coming of Christ: “he shall bruise thy head.” Only one single event, Calvary, is lifted into the light, as needful to be mentioned: “thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Jd 14. 15 gives the next prophecy of early times, and shows that Enoch’s vision had passed from the days before the Flood direct to the coming of the Lord to judge accompanied by His holy angels. Comp. Zh 14. 5 : Mt 25. 31 : Hb 12. 22, 23, mgn 13 : Rv 19. 14. No mention is made of any events of the thousands of years that were to intervene.

Gn 12. 3 is the next prediction, as part of the covenant of God with Abraham. It guaranteed personal and national greatness; again some thousands of years are summarized in one age-enduring principle, that as men should deal with Abram so would God deal with them; and then at once the promise passes to the End Times for its accomplishment, because only under the reign

of Messiah shall "all the families of the earth be blessed" with all the temporal and spiritual blessings promised to Abraham. It is in but very limited measure indeed that this promise finds now some spiritual fulfilment through the gospel (Gl 3. 8).

Ex 34. 10. When Israel had been just brought out of Egypt, and had quickly lapsed at Horeb, God already directed them far forward to the closing times before the millennial era, by saying : "Behold, I make a covenant : before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth, nor in any nation ; and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of Jehovah ; for it is a terrible thing that I do with thee." Now no wonders exceeding those then lately wrought in Egypt have yet been wrought before Israel. But Jl 2. 30, 31 and the *Revelation* are full of much more terrible things.

This passage shows that such an expression as "the people among whom thou art" does not necessarily mean the actual persons then present, but may mean their successors in the same nation or society, which gives guidance in many subsequent passages, as I Th 4. 15, 17, "we that are alive." See Pre. Dis. II.

Nm 23 and 24. Passing over forty years, when Balaam had given four general blessings on Israel, he added these words to Balak : "I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the *latter days*" (24. 14). This is the first occurrence of this expression. He then speaks of the second advent of Christ, saying, "I see him, but *not now* : I behold him, but *not nigh*" ; and then he describes the Star that shall rise and the Sceptre that shall smite and break, which same figures the Lord Jesus in Rv 2. 27, 28 uses together of His return.

This Scripture shows that the term "the latter days" means the times of Messiah as the star and sceptre. There are other passages which amplify this prediction as to the dealings of Israel with Moab and the other surrounding nations of that time. Is 11. 14 : etc.

Dt 31 and 32. At the close of the life of Moses—that is, at the same period that Balaam spoke of the latter days—the song given by God to Moses to teach to Israel was prefaced by an identical reference to the End Times : "I know that evil will befall you in the latter days" (31. 29). The song recites their call, the early prosperity, then their apostasy and punishment, and shortly (32. 29) there comes the exclamation, "Oh, that they would consider their *latter end*," and the song passes at once to the time when Jehovah shall repent Himself in favour of His servants (36), shall judge their enemies, and when in consequence

all nations shall rejoice with His people Israel, and expiation shall be made for His land and for His people (43). This is the era when the promise to Abraham shall find accomplishment. It is deeply important that the divine promise is that the nations shall be brought into the blessings of Israel, not that Israel as a people shall be merged into the blessings of the church. That in this present time a small election of Gentiles rejoices in Christ through the gospel is only a small foretaste of the fulness of this prophecy. It is evident that the judging of Israel's enemies and the receiving of Israel as a people to favour, have no fulfilment as yet.

II Sm 7. 8-16. When making a covenant with David the words of God passed direct from David to the End Days by the assurance never yet realized : " I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them that they may dwell in their own place, and be *moved no more* ; neither shall the children of wickedness *afflict them any more*" (10). Then, after glancing at Solomon, as that one of the sons of David through whom the fulfilment should come, again the thought passes to the far future : " Thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever : thy throne shall be established for ever."

PSALMS. The Psalms are strongly marked by this feature.

The 1st recites the contrasted and fundamental principles of life, and passes at once to the judgment which will separate between the righteous and the wicked. There is little doubt that " stand in the judgment " should be " rise in the judgment," meaning that the wicked will not share in the first resurrection, that of the righteous. Both the LXX and the Vulgate so translate the Hebrew, giving respectively *ἀναστήσονται* (*anastēsontai*) and *resurgent*.

The 2nd Psalm goes forthwith to the End Times, when the nations will unite against God and His Son, and when the latter shall reign at Zion, break to pieces His enemies with a rod of iron, and possess the uttermost parts of the earth. Preliminary illustrations of this defiance of God, such as that mentioned in Ac 4. 25, do not nullify the still later testimony of Christ himself in Rv 2. 27, that the accomplishment of the psalm is still future, at the period when He will become the morning star, as foreseen by Balaam.

Ps 22 similarly joins the sorrows of Calvary to the glories of the kingdom without touching upon intervening matters. In ver. 22 the Lord Jesus, the Sufferer of the former part of the psalm, is leading the praises of His brethren in heavenly glory (Hb 2.

10-12); then Israel is seen honouring Him and satisfied (23-26); and then "all the ends of the earth" turn to Him (27-31).

That great time is a chief theme of the Psalms. See, e.g., 44-48; 65-69; 92-100; 145-150.

The PROPHETS repeatedly show the same feature.

Isaiah's prefatory announcement opens with a denunciation of Israel as then found, but at once lifts the vision to the End Days by saying: "I will turn My hand upon thee, and *thoroughly* purge away thy dross, and will take away *all* thy sin: and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning (see Jh 24. 31): afterward thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, a faithful town. Zion will be redeemed with justice, and her converts with righteousness" (1. 25-27). There never yet has been a time when Zion deserved this title; it and its people have never been notorious for righteousness.

C. 2 is a preface and key to all subsequent prophecies, and it begins with a picture of the millennial era: "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established at the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." This is followed by Jehovah judging the peoples, and these living in peace, learning war no more (2-4).

Cs. 7-12 are another section. It shows distinctly the same feature. The then impending invasion by Assyria is intertwined with an invasion by that power of Palestine known as "Immanuel's land," which description could not, of course, apply strictly till after the child bearing this significant name should have been born (7. 14; 8. 8; 9. 6). The name means "God is with us," and His presence is advanced as the reason why the devices of the "peoples" and "far countries" against Israel should fail, and these peoples themselves be "broken in pieces" (8. 9, 10). Now in c. 9 this is connected with a great light shining in Galilee, with the people being multiplied in number, increased in joy, the staff of their oppressors being broken and their armour and clothing being burned up; and all this because of the Son that had been born, the Prince of Peace, and the establishment of His government upon the throne of David for ever (9. 7). The destruction of Jerusalem forty years after the death of Christ, and its history ever since, shows that these great things did not attend that shining of the light in Galilee which came when Jesus commenced to preach there, which shows that that was a fulfilment of but not the accomplishment of this prophecy.

It awaits the End Days, when the Holy One of Israel shall be in the midst of Zion (12. 6).

That chs. 14 and 15 of Isaiah carry the mind to the End Days, and declare a destruction of Babylon still future is shown in c. XII, Pt. ii, of this book.

It was in the year that king Ahaz died that a destruction of Philistia was foreseen connected with Jehovah founding Zion as a refuge for His people, a conjunction of events yet waiting fulfilment (14. 28-32).

C. 19 is wholly future. It concerns a day never yet seen, when Judah shall be a terror to Egypt (17), though the opposite has often been seen; a day when Egypt, Assyria, and Israel, each and all hitherto enemies, shall be in unity with God and each other, blessed and a blessing in the earth. One of the truly significant facts of this our time is the simultaneous reconstituting of these three lands, with road and railway connecting Egypt and Palestine, and projected with Mesopotamia.

Chs. 24-27 further picture that era never yet seen. It concerns the "earth," the "uttermost parts of the earth" (24. 1-20); it is the time when the angel rebels of heaven shall be shut up in prison (24. 21-23; 27. 1: Rv 12. 7-12; 20. 1-3); when Jehovah of hosts shall reign on Zion (24. 23), and Jerusalem shall be the centre of His worship (27. 12, 13).

It were simple to show that most of the remainder of Isaiah similarly goes forward to the End Times. It is the great theme of c. 40 to the end, as the opening statements show. Israel's warfare is viewed as accomplished, her iniquity pardoned, her era of comfort come. And though here and there the vision looks back, as to Cyrus or to Messiah in humiliation, it is ever that such periods may be quickly linked on in thought to the consummation of the age. This is seen markedly in c. 53, where the vision of Messiah's sufferings is prefaced (52. 13-15) by a prediction of His exaltation and supremacy; then the remark that His visage and form were to be marred is explained in 53. 1-10, and at once this is linked with His being satisfied and with His sovereignty over mighty peoples. Thereupon 54 describes the restoration and joy of Israel, and 55 extends the call to all peoples, to "every one," to share the divine covenant with David; and then is proclaimed again the removal of the curse from nature around. Thus shall God's house be at last the centre for all peoples, for "others" shall be gathered to Israel besides Israelites (56. 1-8).

56-60 is a new section, reciting once again the doleful tale of

Israel's sins and chastisements, but all is still speedily linked with their restoration in the day of Jehovah, when He shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended (60. 20).

C. 61 is crucial, for Christ himself showed at Nazareth how prophecy is to be divided as to eras, and how the past and the final future may be conjoined in one sentence. As far as to the clause "the acceptable year of the Lord" He read in the synagogue, for thus far the predictions were finding a preliminary fulfilment in His ministry of grace. But He did not read the next clause because the "day of vengeance" had not then arrived, nor therefore the time to give joy to Zion and to comfort its mourners. For the moral preparation indispensable to their comfort and joy requires that "day of vengeance" as its means. On the contrary, Christ later predicted a further overthrow of Jerusalem and scattering of its people to follow their rejection of Himself, and looked on yet further to the final destruction and scattering at the end of the Times of the Gentiles (Mt 24 : Mk 13 : Lk 21).

No arguing can alter the fact that Christ thus indicated that *some* interval, and, as it has proved, a vast interval, lay in Isaiah's prophecy. And a precisely similar break, and an intervening period, can be seen in Is 9. 6, 7, between the birth of the Son and His taking the throne of David ; and at Is 10. 11, 12, where the boasting of Sennacherib passes on to when Jehovah shall have performed His *whole* work on Mount Zion, which even yet is not the case ; also at Jr 25. 12, where the close of Israel's seventy years in Babylon passes on to a destruction of Babylon which is to involve "all the nations" (13) and "all the kingdoms of the world which are upon the face of the earth" (26), even "all the inhabitants of the earth" (29), even "all flesh" (31), "from one end of the earth unto the other end of the earth" (33).

We find the same break at Dn 9. 26, for "Messiah shall be cut off and shall have nothing," and then the next event is the destruction of the city. Even those who refuse to see here an interval extending to Antichrist must admit *some* break, for it was almost forty years after Messiah was cut off before Titus destroyed the city.

Mc 5 shows (1) the birth of Christ at Bethlehem ; (2) His being smitten upon the cheek ; (3) then an *interval* during which Israel is "given up," and (4) His feeding His flock in majesty, His being "great unto the ends of the earth," and then that destruction of the Assyrian opened up in Isaiah in connection with the purging and exalting of Israel.

The last but one of the prophets, Zechariah, has the same interval. C. 9. 9 describes Israel's King entering Jerusalem on a colt, and the next verse passes direct to the destruction of Israel's enemies and Messiah speaking peace to the nations and ruling to the ends of the earth. Again, c. 13. 7 tells of the sword smiting the Shepherd at Calvary, and the next verse passes to the last refining of Israel as gold, and their subsequent communion with Jehovah ; which topics are enlarged in c. 14.

All these places show one and the same undefined interval, and also illustrate the main point of this discussion.

Returning to Isaiah, the prominent fact of prophetic scripture under review may meet another difficulty. C. 61 before us continues the theme of Israel's coming glory, as does 62. C. 63 opens with a vision of the Conqueror. At ver. 7 the prophet reviews the early dealings of God with Israel in the days of Moses, and at ver. 15 begins an impassioned appeal to Jehovah to renew those former lovingkindnesses. He speaks (18) of Israel having enjoyed their land but a "little while." In the fact this covered some seven centuries to Isaiah's day, which usage suggests how it may be needful to understand such expressions in other passages. Comp. Hk 2. 3 : Hb 10. 37 ; etc. He goes on to urge that God's holy house had been "trodden down" (63. 18) and "burned with fire" (64. 11), and that the land is a wilderness. It has been urged that this had not yet become fact when Isaiah lived, that he would not describe as fact what was yet future, and that therefore another person (the "second Isaiah") must have written this part of the prophecy after the destruction of Nebuchadnezzar.

But the linking of the far future to the then present makes this suggestion unnecessary. The prophets were often transported in spirit into the future, and described as having taken place or as taking place what they thus saw. Asaph saw the first temple built and led the song in it ; yet he, like Isaiah, describes it as destroyed and burnt (Ps 74). The *Revelation* from c. 4 is another instance. Though all was wholly future (4. 1) John describes things as taking place or as having done so, because in his consciousness he was in the future. See e.g., 5. 7 : "He hath taken the book." Thus also Enoch had described the coming of the Lord with His holy ones as a past event : "the Lord came" (Jd 14), and Paul and Peter speak of the saints as having been already glorified. (Rm 8. 30 ἐδόξασεν : 1 Pt 1. 8 δεδοξασμένη).

Similarly Isaiah puts the treading of the winepress by Messiah as a past event : "I have trodden the winepress . . . I trod down

the peoples" (63. 1-6). Thus in the same chapter (63), first one certainly future event, Messiah's intervention, is put in the past and described by the term "trodden down," and why therefore should not a second future event, the destruction of the temple, be also put as past, being described by the same term, "trodden down"?

In answer to the impassioned appeal by the people, voiced by the prophet, God replies in 65 that He is being sought by them who had not formerly asked after Him, a glance, as we know from Rm 10. 20, 21, at the effect of the gospel in this age; but that, as to Israel, they had been rebellious and provocative (2, 3), and that He will first "measure their work into their bosom" (17). Thus is condensed the extended period of their national chastisement. Then immediately the force of this word "first" is shown. There will not be total extinction of that people, but a seed shall be preserved—the small remnant of cs. 1 and 2—and shall inherit Palestine in security (8-10) and former troubles shall be forgotten (16). Thus again is the past linked to the final outcome, and the vision is carried on to a new heaven and new earth (17), with Jerusalem joying in God and God joying in His people, with nature freed from all calamity and violence.

The last chapter, 66, follows the same order. First reproach because of apostasy, with tumult and vengeance (1-6), but this connected with a sudden rebirth of the land, with joy and peace at that birth (7-14). This is a result from Jehovah coming on the scene with fire and tempest, destroying His enemies (15-17), evangelizing the remoter nations (19), with Israel gathered from afar (20, 21), and the house of Jehovah in Jerusalem the centre of world worship (23).

This being thus so dominant a feature of the richest of the OT books, it is only to be expected that it will be found in the rest. And it is.

JEREMIAH takes up his stern task of standing for God in days of national apostasy. Sorrowfully, but severely, God through him upbraids His faithless people and denounces their dreadful and hastening destruction (cs. 1 and 2). But quickly (3. 1) the call is heard to the harlot to return, and it is repeated in ver. 14. Nor can it be said that the return of the small remnant from Babylon seventy years later was in view here; for when *this* return takes place men "shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it," nor shall men walk any more after the stubbornness of their own heart (17, 18).

The long thunders of wrath roll and reverberate ; the darkness deepens ; but the light of mercy and the voice of peace break in again, sometimes mentioning a return after only seventy years, but later a far grander return and a final. For in c. 30 the scene passes on from Jeremiah's time to a day so great that "none is like it" (7), a day when Israel shall serve Jehovah and *David* their king, whom He will raise up unto them (9, 21) ; and this intermingling of wrath and restoration shall be "in the latter days" (24).

The same passing on to the End Days is found again and again, as in cs. 32, 33, 48, 49, 50, 51.

Then shall Jacob be "the chief of the nations" (31. 7) ; joy, prosperity, and numerical increase shall return then ; and all this shall be established according to a new covenant (31. 31-34). While in Hb 8 this covenant is given a wider application to Gentiles (as in Is 55. 1-5), that does not annul its primary application to Israel as Israel, for its terms are followed immediately by the explicit assurance that not till sun, moon, and stars, the ordinances of heaven, fail, "shall Israel cease from being a *nation* before Me for ever." Not till men can perform the impossibilities of measuring heaven and searching out the foundation of the earth will God cast off all the seed of Israel (35-37). This guarantee is accompanied by details of the rebuilding of the city, and its enlargement, details it were idle to attempt to "spiritualize," for they can yield no sense at all except the literal.

For example, what "spiritual" or metaphorical meaning can be assigned to the tower of Hananel, the gate of the corner, the hill Gareb, Goah, the valley of the dead bodies and the ashes, the brook Kidron, or the corner of the horse-gate toward the east ? (38-40). To Jeremiah and his hearers all these spots were perfectly well known, and the mention of them could suggest no other meaning than the names carried. But as the literal sense is here imperative, so must be literally fulfilled the accompanying promise concerning Jerusalem, "it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down, any more for ever" (31. 38-40). Nothing more severely condemns the "spiritualizing" treatment of Scripture than its utter inability to face the plain force of the prophetic statements. Indeed, this is not treatment, but ill-treatment of the Word of God.

Even a most extreme "spiritualizer" has admitted that the Israel promises of the OT, if taken in their simple and ordinary meaning, will naturally be understood as securing for the nation of Israel the safe occupancy of their ancient land and a proud pre-eminence and sovereignty over the nations of the world.

Then, in order to explain why the prophets wrote in so misleading a style, the same writer adds that the prophets saw the glory that was coming [i.e., of the supposed merging of Israel and the nations into one general church, without national distinctions], but necessarily described it in the terms of their limited horizon. But were the inspired prophets describing things according to their own limited conceptions, or was God by His Spirit causing them to reveal truth? Let this diminishing of the full inspiration of the prophets be noted. It is significant.

Cs. 50, 51. Much of the prophecies concerning Babylon has never found fulfilment, which requires an accomplishment yet to come. The proof of this will be given in c. XII on Rv 17 and 18. In connection with the foretold destruction of Babylon, the earth, not merely Palestine, shall have rest, because the hammer that broke to pieces the whole earth shall itself be broken (50. 34, 23). It were futile to say that *this* has happened.

LAMENTATIONS. Even in the midst of the desolations here pictured the then far distant future breaks through the deep gloom with brilliant ray, for ver. 21, 22 of c. 4 combine the judgment upon Edom with the permanent deliverance of Zion, saying: "The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion: He will *no more* carry thee away into captivity."

EZEKIEL. The opening chapters concern the sins and judgments of the era of the prophet; but c. 16, after recalling the national infidelity of Judah and Israel under the figure of adulterous women, concludes by connecting that period with a time when Sodom, Samaria, and Jerusalem shall be restored to their former estate (53-55), and Israel's youth shall be revived in a glorious maturity under an *everlasting* covenant which Jehovah shall establish (60-63), and which therefore shall not prove transitory, as did the covenant of their youth through Moses.

20. 1-44 is exactly parallel with c. 16.

21 regards the then imminent destruction of Jerusalem as to continue "until He come whose right it [the sovereignty] is; and I will give it to Him" (27), that is, Messiah.

In 26 and 27 the destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar is spoken of as concluding in an overthrow so complete that "thou shalt *no more have any being*; though thou be sought for, yet thou shalt *never be found again*, saith the Lord Jehovah" (26. 21). As if this were not sufficiently emphatic it is repeated at 27. 36, "thou shalt *nevermore have any being*." But after Nebuchadnezzar Tyre shortly rose again to power and wealth, and it was clear that his conquest did not fulfil the predictions. Nor did the more thorough destruction by Alexander three centuries later, for

not even at this date can it be said that Tyre shall not be found, though it be sought for, because the traveller to-day, as we ourselves have twice seen, sees a town there without having to search for it.

Thus Ezekiel's prophecy carries the mind into days still future for its accomplishment, which can be seen further in chs. 34, 36, 38 and 39, and 40 to 48, the last word of this prophet being that "the name of Jerusalem from that day shall be Jehovah Shammah, Jehovah is there" (48. 35). This still awaits fulfilment.

DANIEL. This prophet presents the same feature in marked degree.

C. 2. The vision of the image sketches in brief outline the history of the four world-empires as far as to the end, the feet. But it enlarges upon that closing period of Messiah's intervention.

C. 7 has as its burden the End Days, the destruction of the kingdom of the Beast and the establishing of that of the saints (9-11, 26-28). This will be expanded in our chs. IV, V, on Rv 4 and 5.

C. 8 sketches briefly the overthrow of Persia by Greece under Alexander (1-8), and then passes to the "little horn," the same simile and description as in the preceding chapter, thus indicating the same period and person. In my *Daniel* it is argued that Pusey, Anderson and others were right in declining the view that Antiochus Epiphanes was in view in this prophecy.

C. 9. The vision of the seventy sevens is expressly stated to belong to the "end," even the "full end," that is, to the completing of "the desolations that are determined" (26, 27).

Cs. 10, 11. In my *Daniel* it is shown (with Tregelles) that these chapters are throughout concerned with the End Times.

HOSEA's opening statement combines the then approaching rejection of Israel with their future restoration. Now they are Lo-ruhama, the one that hath not obtained mercy: then they will be Ruhama, that hath obtained mercy (1. 6; 2. 1).

C. 2 is to the same effect, and 3 also: they seek Jehovah their God and David their king. Through the remaining chapters their then present sin and judgment are depicted at length, but ch. 14 connects all this with their final return, their healing, and the revived exhibition of the changeless love of Jehovah.

JOEL's prophecy is occupied wholly with the day of Jehovah (1. 15; 2. 1, 2). It makes no mention of the kings under whom he lived, their history not coming into the book as being immaterial to his message. He begins with an invasion unparalleled before and never to be equalled after (2. 2: comp. Mt 24. 21).

Of necessity there cannot be two events, one subsequent to the other, of which this can be rightly affirmed. The "very small remnant" of Isaiah is shown pleading in the temple (2. 15-17); Jehovah intervenes for them and His land; the enemy is overthrown; the gathering of the nations to Jerusalem, and their judgment there, takes place (comp. Mt 25. 31-46); the Spirit is poured out, nature is revived, and Jehovah dwells in Zion, His holy mountain (2. 18; 3. 21). But, say the "spiritualizers," all this wealth of precise statements now means something quite different, even that, according to the NT, Israel and the nations lose their distinctive identities and become merged in the church of God. Thus is the NT forced to contradict and cancel the OT.

AMOS. Joel ends with Jehovah roaring from Zion (3. 16); Amos begins with the same statement (1. 2). Surveying the wickedness of various peoples, including Israel, the book rounds off all to the same point where it had started, by foretelling the restoration of the tabernacle of David (9. 11-15), and glances at the overthrow of Edom and its possession by Israel. When James (see p. 64) employs this prophecy in application to this present age, it is significant that he does not include the reference to Edom as having present fulfilment, but in this clause seems to follow the LXX, though not in the surrounding clauses. The "spiritualizers" will find it hard to give any sense to Edom here, but the mention here harmonizes with all that other prophets say as to that land at the End.

And when this prophet is fulfilled Israel shall be planted upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land (9. 15), a confirmation of the literal sense of the covenant with David before noticed. Thus Amos also encloses all his predictions within references to the days of Messiah.

OBADIAH deals specifically with Edom, its pride, cruelties, and doom. And all is connected with that same "day of Jehovah upon all the nations" (15), when the remnant in Zion (see Isaiah and Joel) shall escape, when Zion shall be holy, and the Kingdom shall be Jehovah's (21).

JONAH is history; typical history, as all God's histories are; but it has no specific prophecies as to any remote future.

MICAH, as Amos, commences with Jehovah "coming forth out of His place," and coming down to the earth, with mountains melting and valleys cleaving (1. 2-4), physical disturbances often elsewhere predicted to attend that coming, and surely not unnatural accompaniments seeing what took place at Sinai. The coming in view affects "all peoples," all dwellers on earth. It is in the light of this coming that he views his own times of sin and

ruin, the only clear light in which any time is to be surveyed with profit. But he quickly passes on to the latter days, giving the same sentences and arresting simile as Isaiah's opening vision (Mc 4. 1-5 : Is 2. 1-4). Jerusalem is seen established as the world's centre, the Lord judges the nations, wars cease, peace and plenty prevail ; Jehovah reigns in Zion for ever, and Jerusalem enjoys her former supremacy (4. 4-9).

In c. 5 there is another striking instance of widely separated events being set in one sentence. In ver. 1 and 2 the Judge of Israel is (1) "from everlasting," (2) is to be born in Bethlehem, (3) is to be "smitten with a rod upon the cheek," (4) is to be ruler in Israel. Thus is eternity linked with Bethlehem ; then the thought passes over the thirty years of the life to Calvary, and thence goes straight to the kingdom, and Messiah is at once shown (ver. 4) feeding His regathered flock, the children of Israel, in the strength and majesty of Jehovah. The interval of long centuries for Israel is compressed into five words, "He will give them up."

Recurring again to the sins of his own times (6. 1 ; 7. 6), and the consequent miseries, Micah goes on again to the future and final salvation, when Jehovah will give light (7. 7-9), when Israel's walls shall be built (11), when, as before noted, the marvels promised as soon as they had left Egypt shall be performed (15 : Ex 34. 10), and when the truth and lovingkindness promised to their first father, Abraham, shall be enjoyed (7.20). Thus, as by Moses, so by Micah eight centuries later, 1500 B.C. is linked in a sentence with the far distant period when the purposes and covenant of God shall at last find accomplishment.

NAHUM. Whatever indirect reference this prophecy may have had to the overthrow of Nineveh about 612 B.C., it contains expressions most certainly not then fulfilled and even yet awaiting fulfilment. For the *presence* of Jehovah is intimated, so that the mountains quake, the hills melt, the earth is upheaved, and this universally, for it affects "the world, and all that dwell therein" (1. 5). The final deliverance is promised in ver. 12 : "Though I have afflicted thee I will afflict thee *no more*." Clearly this was not accomplished by the former overthrow of Nineveh, for thereafter Israel's afflictions continued under Babylon, and then under Syrian and Roman conquerors, and still endure.

We deplore and protest against the indefinite treatment of Holy Scripture which, in contexts like these, emasculates such words as "no more," making them to mean *no more for a time*. We hold that the *words* of the prophets were of God, and we dare not treat them thus. At that future time in view the heart of Israel will have been changed, they will not provoke their God

by new guilt, their afflictions will consequently have ceased for ever, and *no more* will mean *no more*.

Ver. 15 of c. 1: "Behold, upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings," is to be compared with Is 40. 9; 52. 7, leading on to the time when God shall reign at Zion.

HABAKKUK begins by describing a state of injustice and violence that may well have been around him, but he likewise goes on to the last days. He is told expressly that what he is seeing in the vision is "yet for the appointed time and hasteth toward *the end*." The word "hasteth" is panteth, picturing a runner who has toiled so far and fast that he is panting as he nears the goal (2. 1-3).

That all is indeed in the End Days is marked by a double note of time, for it will be when Jehovah is in His holy temple and all the earth shall keep silence before Him (2. 20: see later on Rv 8. 1) and when in consequence "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah" (2. 14).

ZEPHANIAH begins by foretelling a fearful judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem. In measure it had some answer soon after his day, which was the time of Josiah, through Nebuchadnezzar, but let it not be hastily affirmed that this was his direct message. *That* invasion did not "consume all things from off the face of the ground" (1. 2), for the poorest of the people were left to till the land (II Kn 25. 12, 22). Nor were the birds or the fishes of the sea then destroyed (3). But the prophet passes at once to "the presence of the Lord Jehovah" and the "day of Jehovah," Who has a sacrifice with consecrated guests. Comp. Is 18. 5, 6; 56. 9: Ek 39. 17-20: Rv 19. 17, 18, 21, all passages connected with the advent of Christ at what Zephaniah next terms "the great day of Jehovah" now near and hastening greatly (i. 14).

That this day is yet to come is shown by 2. 11, for at that time there shall take place what has not yet taken place, even that "men shall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the coastlands of the nations." Then shall Israel, like a sick man from whom the deadly cancer of pride has been excised (3. 12), no more do iniquity (3. 13), but shall sing for joy, with the king of Israel, even Jehovah, *in their midst*, mighty to save them, Himself joying in them, and making them a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth (3. 14-20). But my readers must understand that nothing of all this awaits real fulfilment, because the "spiritualizers" say that Israel and the nations are to be merged in one general company, the church.

HAGGAI is a brilliant example of the conjunction of the then present with the final salvation of Israel. The second temple that was then being built is to be filled with glory greater than

Solomon bestowed upon the former temple, and this is to be accompanied by peace in Jerusalem (2. 8, 9). These conjoined conditions have never had fulfilment. But the prophet (2. 22) points onward to the shaking of the heavens and the earth which *Hb 12. 26, 27* tells us is still to come. The day in question is the day when Zerubbabel will be rewarded for his faithful service to God and the despised people of God in that long past day (2. 23). Thus is the past joined on to the distant future.

ZECHARIAH commences by turning the minds of his hearers backward to the obstinacy of their fathers, and makes that the basis of an appeal to his contemporaries (1. 1-6). His first vision announces that at that time the earth was still and at rest ; there were no wars (1. 7-11). Then follows an angelic appeal to Jehovah to have mercy upon Jerusalem against which He had been indignant for the seventy years just ended. A comforting answer is given as to the rebuilding of the city, the temple, and the surrounding cities (1. 12-17). This is followed by a vision of four destroyers of the four world powers that had scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.

Now down to Zechariah's day only one power had scattered all these three, namely Babylon. Assyria had dealt hardly with Israel, but had not prevailed to scatter Judah and Jerusalem, for God had frustrated the attempt of Sennacherib. Moreover, both of these powers, these "horns," had been already "frayed" and "cast down," which forbids that they should be subjects of events to transpire thereafter. As to Persia, the then sovereign power, so far from scattering Israel and Judah, it had rather re-established them in their land. Therefore at this early point the visions pass to the future, with only this brief summary of the history of the nation through the long stretch down to the present time and what may remain of the period of their dispersion. This very short condensation of over two and a half millenniums of years is to be noted. And then immediately the far distant consummation bursts into view : Jerusalem is seen restored, "for I, saith Jehovah, will be unto her a wall of fire round about her, and I will be the glory in the midst of her" (2. 5).

C. 3 pictures a symbolic removing of guilt from Israel's national representative before God, the high priest, and the installing him in his office, which it connects with the arising of the Branch, that is, Messiah, and the "removing of the iniquity of the land in one day" (8, 9). That removing has not yet come, nor has the Branch.

C. 4. The vision of the two "sons of oil that stand by the Lord of the whole earth" is carried into the future by *Rv 11. 4*,

in a vision immediately preceding the hour when great voices in heaven say, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Messiah: and He shall reign for ever and ever." Upon this see c. VII.

C. 6 leads on the thought to the grand consummation, the crowning day of faithful servants of Jehovah, when the Branch, Messiah, shall build the temple of Jehovah and be a priest upon His throne.

Cs. 7 and 8 answer certain questions as to the feasts of the prophets' time, but connect the then judgments (which even now are still continuing) with the final restoration, for "Thus saith Jehovah: I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth; and the mountain of Jehovah of hosts, the holy mountain" (8. 3). But again I must notify my readers that this does not mean what it seems to mean; for though some "spiritualizers" admit there is to be a millennial kingdom on earth, they say the Lord will not Himself be there to reign at Zion, but that the kingdom will have no particular centre, and Jerusalem no particular place in it, nor will Israel as a nation exist. It is all to be governed from heaven after a "spiritual" manner, whatever this may mean.

C. 9 foretells judgments upon cities adjacent to Palestine, north and south, linked with a time when, saith Jehovah, "I will encamp about My house . . . and no oppressor shall pass through them any more" (8). Thus as the first prophecy in Scripture linked Eden, Calvary, and the conquest of the Enemy, so this chapter glances at the entry of the Lord Jesus into Jerusalem riding upon an ass (9), but passes immediately to the day when He shall "cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Judah; and the battle bow shall be cut off; and He shall speak peace unto the nations; and His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River [Euphrates] to the ends of the earth" (10).

C. 11 describes judgments upon Israel connected with their base sale of their Shepherd for thirty pieces of silver, but c. 12 adds a vivid account of Jerusalem besieged, of Jehovah intervening for their salvation, of His pouring upon them the spirit of grace and supplication and mourning (comp. Jl 2. 15-17), and Jerusalem thereafter dwelling in safety.

In c. 13 the opening of the fountain that shall cleanse them (i.e., the river of the water of life, the outpouring of the Spirit) is shown to depend upon the smiting of the Shepherd, wounded in the house of those who should have been His friends, and the consequent scattering of the flock; but this is linked on to a

judgment that shall refine the remnant of the people. The supplication, already mentioned, shall be accepted, and Jehovah shall say of Israel, "It is My people ; and they shall say, Jehovah is my God" (13. 9). It is plain that *these* promised results did not follow in Israel when this Scripture had a very partial application by Christ's few followers forsaking Him the night of His betrayal (Mk 14. 27).

C. 14 explains this refining fire as a siege of Jerusalem with all nations gathered. The attack succeeds, and is followed by a sack of the city, with half of the people being dragged into captivity, but the rest being left there. This forbids a reference to A.D. 70, for Titus removed *all* who survived the capture. But all is suddenly changed by the Lord joining personally in the fray : "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives" (4) ; His sway shall become universal, "Jehovah shall be King over all the earth" (9) ; and all common vessels shall be sacred to Him, usable in the sacrifices that will be offered in the temple that He, the Branch, shall build (14. 20, 21 ; 6. 12, 13).

MALACHI denounces the wickedness of Edom and Judah, but connects the judgments already begun or threatened with a time when it shall be owned that "Jehovah is magnified beyond the border of Israel" (1. 5), and when His "name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering : for My name shall be great among the Gentiles, saith Jehovah of hosts." This has never yet been ; rather at this day peoples which once owned that Name are refusing longer to honour it. But it will be ; it must be ; for the word of the Lord must be accomplished ; so that here also the past is put in contact with the End Times.

C. 2 speaks severely of then existing evils in the priesthood, to which is joined a prophecy of Messiah coming as a refining fire for their purification, so that their offerings shall become righteous and acceptable (3. 1-4).

Again the prophet complains of those around him (3. 13-15). Some fear the Lord and give heed, and their names are recorded before Him (16). But their recompense is promised "in the day that I do make, saith Jehovah" (17, 18), the day when the righteous shall be at last clearly distinguished from the wicked (comp. Mt 25. 31-46, the sheep separated from the goats), the day which shall burn up the godless as stubble in the furnace, but shall bring joy and triumph to the righteous by the Sun of righteousness arising with healing in His wings (4. 1-3).

At the time in question the law of Moses, with its statutes and ordinances, is to be observed, which shows that it is as Jews, not

as Christians, that the remnant of Israel will stand before the eyes of Jehovah, and that therefore it is no question of all men merging into one company, the church. Elijah will come to strengthen them in this path of preparation for meeting their Messiah (4-6).

Thus the OT closes with the same feature with which it commenced, and which pervades it in every part, making its testimony one united consentient message, even the feature of linking the time of the prophet with the great goal of human history from the Fall and throughout, the goal of the psalmist who cried in ecstatic expectation :

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice . . .
Before Jehovah ; for He cometh,
For He cometh to judge the earth :
He will judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples with His truth. (Ps 96. 11-13.)

It is in comparatively few passages that it may be difficult to see whether the end of the Gentile period is in view or some preceding time. It is the former when such expressions are used as "the latter days," the "end," a "full end," "the consummation determined." Also when the "whole earth," "all nations" and other universal terms are found; as well as when there is described a permanent and holy condition of peace and plenty, with nature also freed from the curse and flourishing. When Israel is pictured as renewed in heart, sin being no more found in them, God's blessing being guaranteed for ever, the people to be no more rooted up from their land, the presence of Jehovah in visible glory at Zion, Jerusalem the city of the great King and the centre of rule and worship for all nations—then the era is millennial. And those places which foretell the climax of human rebellion against God under the last emperor, and the culmination of divine wrath, as preparatory to the kingdom of the heavens, these also are concerned with the last days. Now in the great mass of predictive passages these signs are so clear as to show that the End Days are the chief subject of prophecy.

The picture thus afforded of the development of the plans of God for this earth is full, consistent, and entrancing. The attempt to give a so-called "spiritual" sense to this vast mass of predictions involves an eliminating of any real sense or value from the greater part by far of prophetic Scripture; for in its first and obvious sense the major part of it has to do with the End Days, with the nation of Israel, and with the Gentile nations

as nations. If the detail is not to be fulfilled literally it might as well not have been given.

Nor is it difficult to see why the beginnings and endings of history are linked together and occupy the field of Scripture, while the intermediate stretches are seldom surveyed. In the former the principles characterizing rebellious man and the principles directing the government of God are sufficiently exhibited. Now these both are constant, unvarying factors, which is why history repeats itself; and thus their interacting and clash will be ever producing similar effects in the affairs of earth. These, then, having been once adequately illustrated in the histories, there would be no moral advantage in a frequent repetition of their details in either the histories or the prophecies.

But what is of supreme value, indeed indispensable to faith and piety, is to be forewarned as to the closing perils of the ages, and adequately informed of the final stages of the conflict that will lead to victory. The satanic fury and intensity of those never-to-be-equalled days will be a dreadful danger to the majority who have some love for Christ, even as He said: "Because iniquity shall be multiplied the love of the many [the majority] shall wax cold": Mt 24. 12. Therefore the grace of God has told fully of those days, that when they arrive faith may stand firm, knowing that then redemption will have drawn nigh (Lk 21. 28).

We shall now study this same dominant feature in the prophecies of the New Testament.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

For four centuries after Malachi God sent no prophet of whom any record is preserved, but then the coming into the world of the greatest Prophet, the Son of God, was occasion for an outburst of prophesying.

The first prophecy of NT times shows the same feature that marked the first in the OT, the then present being linked to the second advent of Christ. Gabriel told Mary that her son to be born was to be called Jesus, and that "the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Lk 1. 32, 33). No reference was made to any intervening work that the Saviour should do, not even to Calvary, or to any events of the following two millenniums of years. It is evident that the angel took literally the promise to David as

to a son to rule, and therefore also the predictions as to His government, such as Is 9. 6, 7.

The second prophetic utterance was the song of Mary (Lk 1. 46-55), and it is plain that she too regarded the promised events in the same sense as did Gabriel, even the fulfilment of "mercy covenanted to Abraham and his seed for ever," which would include the "scattering of the proud" and the "putting down princes from their thrones" (51, 52), deeds which, as regards Israel and Christ, God did not do when Jesus was here, for it was the proud and enthroned that derided and killed Him.

The third prophecy was Zacharias' noble declaration concerning the Messiah, whose way his son John should prepare (Lk 1. 67-79). It is clear that Zacharias expected far greater events than followed the sojourn among men of Jesus of Nazareth. He, like Mary, looked for the fulfilment of the sworn covenant with Abraham (73), which concerned God's people Israel, and included "salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of *all* that hate us" (71), in order that, being thus delivered, Israel should be able to serve God *without fear* (74). This was part of the message of former times, and a part that still waits realization at the second coming of Messiah.

Thus this third prophecy of the NT contains this same feature.

Simeon and Anna also connected the birth of Jesus with its final outcome, the "glory of Thy people Israel" and "the redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk 2. 32, 38). Simeon touched briefly upon Calvary: "a sword shall pierce through thine own soul"; but to such as these it was not simply a matter of personal salvation in the spiritual realm and in eternity, nor of individual Gentiles and Jews becoming members of the church of God, for they had not been informed of that still reserved part of the counsels of God. They looked for a glory promised to Israel as a people, which should include the deliverance of the city of Jerusalem, the divinely appointed centre of that people. The plain sense of their words is based on the equally plain sense of the promises of God they knew.

Thus the prophecies which accompanied the birth of the Prophet concur in directing the mind to (1) a literal fulfilment of the OT predictions; and (2) in connecting the birth of the King with the establishment of His kingdom on earth, a surely very natural connection, but one which we now know to have been very far in the future.

Nor can it be said that these were but the expectations of pious but unenlightened Jews, but that we are to learn from fuller NT

instruction that their earthly notions were not the real meaning of the OT ; because (1) any supposed ignorance in them cannot be imputed to the first messenger, the angel Gabriel come from standing in the presence of God, sent specially to announce the birth of the Son as to sit on David's throne ; and (2) Zacharias spoke as a prophet by the fulness of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1. 67) ; and (3) it is emphasized that the same Spirit was upon Simeon, and guided him to the temple just as Jesus was brought there ; and (4) Anna is distinctly called a prophetess ; nor (5) can piety attribute Mary's sudden and exalted song to any less agent than the Spirit who a moment before had filled and inspired Elizabeth's utterance concerning her.

Moreover, if the plain sense of their words was not correct, but the fact was that the literal Israel was past in the plan of God, and there remained only a merging of the spiritual of them into the church, why were these inspired but now misleading utterances put on record later by the Spirit to be read by readers of the Gospels long after the church period had commenced ? On the supposition in view, the repeating of such statements could only confuse and mislead Christians, no warning whatever of the change suggested being given in the narratives.

The next prophecies were those of John the Immerser concerning Jesus (Mt 3 : Mk 1 : Lk 3 : Jn 1). They present four features belonging to our subject. (1) That the kingdom of the heavens had drawn nigh, i.e., in the King being present in person. (2) That Jesus was the sin-bearer, the *Lamb* of God ; i.e., the thought goes to Calvary. (3) That He would baptize men in the Holy Spirit, i.e., Pentecost. (4) And then the predictions leap the whole present age to its closing days and go to the judgment day predicted in the first psalm and other Scriptures, when the godly shall be gathered into safety, as wheat into the garner, and the chaff be burned up. See my *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.

The teachings and prophecies of our Lord follow.

Mt 5-7. The Sermon on the Mount gives principles and precepts for the present observance of all subjects of the kingdom of the heavens. It promises trials in this age, but sets all in the light of that coming Day. The believer is directed to heaven as the place of reward (Mt 5. 12), "great is your reward in heaven." Peter tells us later that this reward will be received at the revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven (I Pt 1. 13 ; 4. 13). Disciples are taught to offer the prayer "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth," which further links

the sermon to the second advent of the King. And all conduct is to be tested at that great day which will fall as a tempest to test each man's building, a figure borrowed from OT prophecies of the Day of the Lord (Ps 18. 9-16 : Is 28. 2 ; 29. 6 : etc.).

Mt 13. The parables of the kingdom bear the same mark. They indicate the chief moral conditions that develop all through this age, now here, now there, and so far are a brief outline of the period. That they begin with Christ's own work is clear from His words, " He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man " (37). This beginning is at once linked with the close of the period, for " the harvest is the consummation of the age " (39). Details of the long centuries during which the sowing is to be continued are not needed, nor is any description required of incidents that may happen in connection with the last parable, the casting and dragging of the net. Such details are, so to say, customary and commonplace, incidental to the operations ; but in the latter parable again the thought hastens straight to the " consummation of the age," the point of separation of good from bad.

Lk 12. It is the same with the Lord's instruction as His ministry draws to its end. Disciples are to expect tribulation, but need not be anxious in mind. The Holy Spirit will aid them in every emergency (12) ; their Father will care for them in every need, for He purposes to give them the kingdom (22-34). Thus the thought passes from these general facts of the age to the coming kingdom. Let disciples, then, be like men looking for the return of their Lord (35, 36). The business of the overseers of His house during the, say, two thousand years of His absence is comprised sufficiently in one sentence, to give food in season to the household. Details of household affairs are here not necessary. Let them only be ready to give an account with joy when their Master shall suddenly come.

Lk 17. 22-37. How striking is the same conjunction in the statements in this chapter. You will not need to be told that the Son of Man has come, even as you do not need to be told that the lightning flash has blazed from east to west, for that Coming will not be a secret affair. But before glory comes suffering : " first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation " (25). " First," before what ? before the long and weary centuries of persecution ? Nay : first before that Coming in glory ; and therefore the next statement goes direct to the days to precede that Coming, which will be like those before the Flood and those before the destruction of Sodom. Thus, because the histories of the ancient past are with us, it is unnecessary to detail the events of the intervening future, for

reference to the histories suffices. And so Calvary and the Coming were linked, almost as if nothing would come between. Yet the Speaker knew very well that much must be done between, but it was not needful to detail the work.

Lk 19. That the Lord knew that the interval would be long, and wished His followers to know it, is seen in His comparison of Himself to a nobleman going into a far country to secure a kingdom. In those days a long journey took a long time, and so also would the negotiations to secure a disputed title to a throne. Indeed, the parable was spoken expressly to correct their erroneous supposition that the advent of the kingdom in glory was near. Even more distinct is the corresponding parable in Mt 25, spoken but a few days later, for then Christ said plainly, "Now *after a long time* the Lord of those servants cometh" (19).

The two parables indicate (1) the business of the nobleman while absent—the securing His rights to the Kingdom. This will not be accomplished in fact until the Prince of this world shall have been dispossessed of all status in heaven and cast out thence, as seen in Rv 12. 9, 10. (2) The business of His servants during His absence—even looking after His interests while He is away. (3) The attitude to Him of some of His subjects, even open antagonism. These matters being briefly made clear, the instruction passes forthwith to the Return and its issues for all parties.

Mt 19. 23 to 20. 16. *Riches and Entering the Kingdom. The Labourers in the Vineyard.* Entrance into the kingdom demands the sacrifice of one's *all*—here is a feature of the whole age; the recompense will be found "in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory" (19. 28). Labourers must toil all the day, and it is "when *even* was come," the close of the day, that all were paid together. Thus Paul said: I have won my crown, and it will be given to me "in that Day" (II Tm 4. 8). The expression is emphatic as to the special day meant: "in that day" (*ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ*).

Lk 19. 41-44: Mt 23. 37-49. Drawing near to Jerusalem, as foretold by Zechariah, the Lord burst into tears and announced its overthrow, then less than forty years off. With that brief mention, repeated in the temple a few days later, the curtain drops on Israel's history, to be lifted only when that people shall say of Jesus, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Thus are conjoined the first and the last centuries of this age. Details of Israel's long wanderings are not material: the period had been sufficiently sketched by Moses (Lv 26).

THE CLOSING PROPHETIC PARABLES

The Vineyard (Mt 21. 33-46 : Mk 12. 1-12 : Lk 20. 9-18). This presents (1) the time then present—the murder of the Son, and the vengeance on the murderers (A.D. 70). (2) The whole present gospel age in one sentence—the vineyard entrusted to others. (3) The end of this age—the stone falling, crushing opponents to powder and scattering them as dust. Comp. Dn 2.

The Marriage Feast (Mt 22. 1-14). This gives (1) the then present—guests invited, but rejecting the call, ill-treating the messengers, and they and their city destroyed (A.D. 70). (2) Others invited—the work of the gospel age condensed in two verses (8, 9). (3) The close of the age—the King viewing His guests at the time of the feast, which is the main point of the parable.

The Olivet Discourse (Mt 24; 25 : Mk 13 : Lk 21). This most important utterance of the Lord shows exactly what we see elsewhere. The present age is outlined briefly ; but “the End is not immediately.” Certain features will be seen during the whole age, but by ver. 13 of Mt the thought has gone on to that End, and certain events will be “the beginning of travail.” As often, attention to the figure of speech used avoids error by giving the clue to the true meaning. The Speaker has passed to the very close of this age, for, though the expectant mother is liable to more or less distress throughout the period she carries the child, yet “travail” is only the brief though most acute time immediately before the birth. If but the force of this one figure had been grasped the church of God might have been spared from books innumerable and bulky, written on the futile plan of trying to make the details of nineteen centuries fit the details of prophetic scriptures, especially the book of *Revelation*.

Thus in this major prophecy the whole gospel age is summarized briefly, while its closing days are elaborated fully.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Mt 25. 1-13) is not a forecast of this whole age. Upon this the particle with which it commences is emphatic. The Lord had been dealing with the period immediately and directly before His appearing, and He said : “*Then* ($\tauότε$ at that particular time) the kingdom of the heavens shall be made like unto ten virgins” (Darby : it is the future *passive*). A common notion is that the virgins represent the church slumbering through the long centuries, and that the awakening midnight cry went forth early in the 19th century by the renewed interest in the subject of the second Advent. This is excluded by the distinct note of time “*then*.” It has been

acutely remarked that, if that notion were correct, the foolish virgins would by now have had a good long time to go and buy oil ; but the parable indicates the exact contrary : the time between the "cry" and the Coming did not suffice for even this purpose. This shows that the parable belongs to the very End Days.

The Talents have been noticed above.

The Sheep and the Goats (Mt 25. 31-46). The separation between these is to take place "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him" (25. 31). Comp. Jl 3. 11. 12 : Zh 14. 5 : Hb 12. 22, 23, all applying to the Advent in glory which is to close this age of grief and open that next age of bliss.

Ac 1. 6-11. "Lord, dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel ?" The question proves that nothing in the teaching they had heard from Christ had caused the apostles to doubt that the apparent meaning of the OT was the real meaning, and that the kingdom would be restored to Israel. The only question was as to the time for this.

Nor did the answer to the question at all correct this idea. The season for that restoration was not their then concern ; let them leave it, and go about the task of the intervening period, witnessing to their Lord unto the utmost parts of the earth. Thus again the whole age was condensed in a sentence, and forthwith their Lord was taken up into heaven, and immediately two angels at once carried their minds to the end of the age now set in, by assuring them of His due return.

Thus the book of Acts opens with our feature, as did Genesis and the Gospels.

Ac 2. 16-21. After ten days Peter, explaining the then outpouring of the Spirit, uses a scripture (Jl 2) which connects that event with the "last days," and specifically with the coming of "the day of the Lord, the great and notable Day."

Ac 3. 18-21. Similarly, a short time later, Peter, explaining the healing of the cripple, connects that working of God with the "seasons of refreshing" and "the restoration of all things" foretold by prophets of old as to attend the return of Messiah.

Ac 15. Peter had reminded the assembly at Jerusalem of the first bringing in of Gentiles into the church of God (7-11). Paul and Barnabas had narrated the extension of that work through their labours (12). James pointed out that the prophets agree in intimating this part of the divine program, and quoted Am 9. 11, 12. Now Amos had said that "in that day" God will do

certain works, but James changes this to "after these things" God will do these works. The prophet had said that those works would be done in the day when God had destroyed all the sinners out of His people Israel; but James' words cannot mean that, for this last work had not been done when he was speaking. Nor has it yet been done. "After these things" can only mean, "after the completion of that work," the beginning and progress of which has just been narrated to us. Thus the work in question as James described it, is the "taking out from among nations ($\xi\acute{\epsilon}\theta\tau\omega\tau$) a people for God's name," i.e., the church.

Here, then, once more this whole age of outgathering is covered by a sentence: and "after these things," what then? Then the End Times, bringing fulfilment of the prophets in three chief matters:

"After these things"

1. "I will return"—the second Advent.
2. "I will build again the ruins of the tabernacle of David, and I will set it up"—the restoration of the kingdom to David and Israel, in the person of David's Son. Not a word is given to suggest that this does not now mean what it says, but means the same as the former statement of the gathering of the church.
3. The general turning of the Gentile peoples to Jehovah, according to the prophets. See, e.g., Is 66. 20-23: Zb 14. 16-19: Ps 67: etc. The terms James used ($\sigma\pi\omega\tau\; \bar{a}v$ that, in order that) make unmistakable that the re-establishment of the house of David is a condition precedent to and a cause of the rest of the Gentiles seeking the Lord, and all the prophets put the two things in that order. It is the denial of the idea that through the gospel now proclaimed the very vast majority of Jew and Gentile will enter the church, the irreclaimable minority be destroyed in judgment, and the house of David, as such, never be restored at all. The denying to Israel of prior place among the nations is a cancellation of the OT and a confusing of the NT.

Ac 17. 30, 31. If we listen to Paul preaching to Gentiles at Athens we shall hear him call men everywhere to repent—the call of this whole gospel age—and then at once direct their minds to the day of judgment.

THE EPISTLES. It is thus in Paul's letters.

Romans. The present is the time of suffering, but this is set in connection with the glory that is to be revealed to usward (8. 17, 18). Creation groans, but this will end when the sons of God are revealed in glory (8. 19-25). The mystery of the stumbling of Israel as a people, and the room thus found for the favour of God reaching out to Gentiles, does not nullify the OT promises;

for repentant and believing Israel shall be grafted in again, and "there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer : He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (11. 25-29). And believers are to rejoice that thus the prophets will be fulfilled, in that "all the peoples" shall at last praise God and submit to the rule of the "Root of Jesse," i.e., to Israel's Messiah (15. 8-13).

In this discussion by Paul of the relative positions and prospects of Gentile believers and Israel, there is to be noted his use of the titles "Jacob" and "Root of Jesse." In the argument for merging all the godly of Israel into the church of God, and the elimination of a national future for Israel, much is made of the very rare application in the NT of the names Israel and Zion in a spiritual and heavenly connection (Gl 6. 16 : Hb 12. 22 : Rv 14. 1). But "Jacob" and the "Root of Jesse" are *not* so used in the NT, they are *not* applied to things heavenly, they belong to the earthly Israel, and are quoted in Romans in their natural sense as used by Isaiah or Gabriel, as in "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever" (Lk 1. 33). No other usage is ever hinted in Scripture.

I Cr 15. Here it is the same—the far past and the far future are conjoined, the intervening times being passed over. Death brought into mankind by the first Adam ; resurrection by the last Adam, who will abolish death (21-28). A broad outline of the divine program from resurrection and onwards is given. First Christ rose ; the intervening age is unnoticed ; then His people will be raised at His coming ; the next age, the millennial, is unnoticed, save by the solitary remark "He must reign" ; then the final triumph is indicated, "God all in all."

Paul's later epistles take all this for granted, and follow the same plan of setting all experiences of saints in connection with the Coming.

Eph 5. 22-33 is a sample of his teaching. The past—the love of Christ to His church, and His sacrifice to acquire her (25) ; the present—His work of purifying and perfecting her, the age thus condensed into a sentence (26) ; the future—the marriage of the Lamb (27).

In HEBREWS it is the same. The Son creates, descends, dies, ascends (1. 1-5), and forthwith the thought passes on to His re-entry into the habitable universe (6) and to His throne and sceptre (8), in the day for which He waits at the right hand of God (13). Events to take place on earth this epistle does not open, but instead it discloses the Great Priest serving in heaven, and bids His people patiently to tread on over the desert, so as at last to enter into that sabbath rest which the millennial

kingdom of the Son will verily be to those who did not faint and fall in the wilderness (cs. 3, 4). They are to be imitators of all the heroes of faith of all the ages, men and women who set their hopes on the future and the heavenly (c. 11), for they were expecting another country and city (11. 14-16), and a kingdom that cannot be shaken (12. 28). This is the calling, true attitude, and prospect of believers of this present age ; but when the writer deals with the new covenant aforepromised by God, upon the basis of which the better things promised are to be gained, so far is he from sweeping away Israel nationally, and teaching that as a people they have now no future, that he cites the prophets as they stand in the OT, and says that that covenant has yet to be " made with the *house* of Israel and with the *house* of *Judah*" (8. 8), and again in ver. 10 he repeats that it is with Israel as a house that the covenant is to be made, and that they shall be unto God a *people*. Thus the present entry of individuals into the heavenly privileges of the covenant are not made to annul the application of it hereafter to Israel corporately. The creation of a spiritual Israel according to the NT does not cancel the promises to Israel as a people, but the fulfilment of these is only deferred until some of them in a future day become believing and spiritual in mind. But by then the opportunity to secure a place in the heavenly Israel, Zion, and kingdom will have passed by, and they must be content with a share in the earthly people, city, and kingdom.

In JAMES it is the same. The present is hard and difficult ; but those who are rich in faith, though they may be poor in this world, are promised a kingdom (2. 5) : let them therefore endure patiently until the coming of the Lord. Not that this event will be immediately : on the contrary, as the farmer must wait for the appointed season of harvest, and must have long patience through two rainy seasons, so must they be patient. Yet that Coming has drawn nigh (5. 7, 8 *ηγγικεῖ*), in the sense that it is the next event of moment, for nothing of the many affairs to intervene is of any great moment to faith.

PETER is in the same line. Christ by His resurrection gave us a living hope of an inheritance (I Pt 1. 3). Until the time to inherit shall have come the Father acts as Guardian to His growing heirs who trust Him ; but it is in " the last time " that this full end of salvation shall be reached (5) and during the interval the heirs are to fix their hope undividedly upon the revelation of Jesus Christ (1. 13).

JOHN. The general attitude of John is striking. He knows that he has been introduced into the world that is eternal by

participating in the life that is eternal ; that life which the Word *is* Who had been eternally with the Father and had been lately manifested in human life on this earth. And he was living in the light and joy of that eternal sphere (I Jn 1. 1-4).

Looking out thus from eternity upon the ages of time, past and to come, he describes this one age, in which he was living as a man on earth, as "a last hour" ; "Little children, it is a last hour" (2. 18). The essential features of the last period before the world as a system of things will vanish (2. 17) are present : many antichrists have arisen, forerunners of *the* Antichrist ; and therefore "little children, abide in Him" ; by obedience maintain your fellowship with Him in His eternal sphere, in order that "if He be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be put to shame from before Him at His coming" (Darby, 2. 28 : comp. Mt 25. 30), whenever that may take place.

If the standpoint of eternity, whence John looks out, had been recognized, some learned and lengthy discussions of these words "a last hour" need not have been written. His attitude is that of his brother apostles : the general features of the age are all that we need to mark ; its detail and recurring developments do not need mention : the climax of wickedness in the Wicked One, and the triumph of righteousness in the Righteous One, are the vital matters ; and that we should so walk as to meet the Righteous One with joy.

JUDE. It has been pointed out above that the prophecy of Enoch, which Jude quotes, connected his own early time with the very far distant coming of the Lord to judgment, and put this as a past event : "the Lord *came* . . . to execute judgment." Naturally Jude's own statements are in harmony with this. The general features of the past mark the present age. The essential qualities of Cain, Sodom, Balaam, and Korah are still reproduced in ungodly men : therefore "beloved . . . keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (20, 21). They who do this diligently shall never stumble on the journey (comp. II Pt 1. 10), and will find that God, in response, is able to guard them from stumbling, and thus to effect the great consummation of His purpose and their hope, even "to set them before the presence of His glory, without blemish, in exceeding joy" (24).

REVELATION. The Apocalypse is the top stone of the pyramid of divine truth revealed in the Word of God, and, as such a top stone must, it follows the lines of the pyramid it crowns. A good deal not before made known is indeed revealed, but it is woven in among things already known. It were a mistake to

suppose that all that John saw at that time was then first revealed. Rather it is that by means of several series of visions the book sets forth in order things which had before been revealed "piece-meal" (Hb 1. 1 *πολυμερῶς*), i.e., by scattered and mostly unconnected announcements. Now, as the whole Bible, as has here been shown, is marked by the feature that the End Times, and the re-establishment on this earth of the kingdom of God, so that again heaven and earth shall be one empire of God under Christ, are the dominant subject, so is it to be expected that this closing section of the Oracles of God will be occupied with the same theme. This is the standpoint taken in this present commentary, where the proof will be found.

From this it appears that the pious and learned men who have expended prodigious labours to show that the *Revelation* was a minute and marvellous prophecy of this whole age, were engaged in establishing that the book is a complete anomaly in Holy Scripture, that in place of completing all prophecy it is inharmonious with all, in both plan and theme, except indeed as regards the few closing chapters. Happily their scheme of interpretation has no great practical importance for us to-day, since they seem agreed that almost all has already happened, and that but little remains before the Advent.

But from our point of view the whole book remains of the utmost importance, as an unveiling to spiritual men of what must be faced and endured in that dread era when the saints will so sorely need all possible instruction and every indication available that their redemption has at last drawn nigh, and may so find strength to lift up the head.

For the Lord in grace has told us these things before they come to pass, that when they come to pass faith may abide vigorous, instead of being taken by surprise and so succumb. This maintenance of faith is vital, for true are the words of Belcher: "I find that, while faith is steady, nothing can disquiet me; and when faith totters, nothing can establish me." And the appalling peril to faith in that most appalling of all periods explains in part why the wisdom of God has given in His Word so great a place to those days and their all-glorious consummation. The book has been a comfort and strength to suffering saints the centuries through: it will be simply indispensable in the End Days. It is of the deepest interest that, as with *Daniel* (12. 4) so with *Revelation*, many are reading and reviewing it, and knowledge of it is being increased. This was to be a feature at "the time of the End," and if this present study shall at all help to increase this knowledge it will serve its design.

SELECT STUDIES IN THE REVELATION

CHAPTER I

TITLE AND INTRODUCTION (1. 1-8)

SECTION I

Every great work on any great theme must be written upon one and the same common plan, if it is to be readily and generally intelligible. The closing section of Holy Scripture conforms to this necessity.

1. *The Title* of a book should reveal its general character. Here it is contained in ver. 1-3. This book is a *revelation*. The opening sentence states that it is “A revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him, to show unto his servants the things which *in their entirety* must come to pass with speed” (Pember, *Great Prophecies concerning the Church*, 438; and see Alford). It is not an obscuration but a revelation; it reveals, not conceals. Its symbols are not to hide the meaning but to illuminate it. Symbols form part of its method of instruction, but they teach, not confuse. Yet the pupil must have these faculties: Hearing (1. 10), sight (1. 11), concentration, reflection, submission (1. 3).

Rightly rendered as above, this opening statement did not assert that the events were to happen soon after John was seeing the visions, but that when they did occur all would be fulfilled in a short period. The laboured attempt to discover a slow fulfilment throughout the long centuries of this era is as much precluded as is the erroneous notion that the apostles mistakenly supposed that the Lord might return “at any moment” while they lived.

The thought is exactly that stated by Christ when speaking on the same theme, even that the generation of men of which He was speaking (not *in* which He was speaking), and which should see those events begin, “shall not pass away till all these things be accomplished” (Mt 24. 34). All these events shall occur within the life of one generation; for as Rm 9. 28, adapting and explaining Is 10. 22, says: “The Lord will execute His word upon the earth, finishing it and *cutting it short*.” This is for the sake of His chosen ones: “for the elects’ sake those days shall

be shortened," and also because otherwise the then demon-driven race of men would exterminate itself and "no flesh would be saved" (Mt 24. 22).

The final words of the Lord from heaven (22. 12, 20), "I come quickly," do not mean "soon" but "swiftly." There might be (history shows there has been) a long intervening period (which is what Christ repeatedly foretold, Lk 19. 11, 12 : Mt 25. 14, 19); but when His return journey once begins it will be quick. J. N. Darby made this sense clear in his German translation of the Bible, by adding to the word *bald* (soon) in the verses in c. 22 the footnote, "Eig. schnell, eilends" ("Properly, swiftly, with haste"). This is the true force of the Greek *ταχέως*, and it is regrettable that he did not make this plain in his generally exact English translation, instead of leaving without note the word of double meaning, "quickly." Upon this question see on 22. 6, 7, "The Conclusion," c. XX.

This book being thus a *revelation* is intended to be understood, for how otherwise could one keep what is written in it? (1. 3). And it *can* be understood, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, though it contains some "deep things of God," for the Spirit understands these and is with the humble to make them known (I Cr 2. 10-12).

Only it must be remembered that the *Revelation*, whilst a complete book in itself, is at the same time itself the completion of the whole Book of God, and the meaning of its allusions, scenes, and symbols must be sought primarily in preceding scriptures. It is presumed that the reader is well acquainted with all prior divine revelations, and so is in a position to appreciate this closing revelation, in which all earlier lines of prediction converge, are systematized, explained, and completed.

We heard a teacher, somewhat prominent in his circle, a Master of Arts and a writer of books, say at a prophetic conference: That the prophetic parables of Christ and the book of the *Revelation* are difficult to understand; but the statements of Paul in I Th 4 and in I Cr 15 are quite plain. We should therefore found our views on these clear passages, not on those obscure portions of Scripture; which former he proceeded to employ in the sense generally accepted, but which sense cannot be made to harmonize with Christ's teaching or the *Revelation*.

If a professed exponent of any other subject were to admit that he could not understand by far the greater number, and the more important, of the standard text books upon that subject, he would scarcely be considered qualified to speak upon that matter. Yet this is pretty much the position, not of that teacher

alone, but of the more part of those who think as he does. Their prophetic views are virtually drawn from a supposed meaning of one or two passages, and these not the most prominent or full upon the topics in question.

This method of enquiry is radically unsound, nor is it matter of wonder that it has contributed to a scheme of interpretation inharmonious in itself and at variance with the prophetic parts of the Word thus neglected or misapplied.

The proper line of approach to the *Revelation* is by the first chapter of Genesis, as has, of course, been seen and followed by many students. He who would at all master these subjects should (1) Familiarize his mind with the prospects of the future opened out step by step through the law, the psalms, and the prophets. In the first instance he should consider carefully what they say, without reference to the New Testament. Let him attempt, as far as possible, to reach thus the state of mind in which the apostles were (or ought to have been) when they first came under the influence of Jesus Christ.

(2) Thus prepared, the student should listen next, and with the utmost care, to the further teachings of the Lord, seeking from Him with faith that same opening of the understanding which He granted to the apostles. It is well to ponder these explanations of the Old Testament, with the fuller openings of the subject by Christ, without as yet assuming that one has read the Epistles or the Apocalypse.

(3) Thus further instructed, the student may approach hopefully the later unfoldings given by the Spirit, the mind having been thus prepared for these by some acquaintance with what the later and complete revelations everywhere take for granted are known.

For ourselves, we venture to think that the heart imbued with humility, faith, and diligence, will then find that the prophetic scripture is really written as simply and intelligibly as is all other scripture, so that the *spiritual* man will come to see that even the Apocalypse is truly what its name means—an *unveiling*, a revelation, the meaning of which opens up to him by degrees, so that ever fewer perplexities remain. This book, in this particular, may be compared with Bradshaw's Railway Guide, which is indeed complicated to the dilatory or to the stupid, but yields full and exact information to the diligent and intelligent.

2. *The Introduction* is in verses 4 to 7. It opens with a benediction to the churches from the triune God, the eternal; the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ. As remarked before (p. 20),

the "seven spirits" must needs be a figurative expression for the fulness of the one divine Spirit.

Jesus Christ is mentioned last so as to lead on easily to those features of Him which were to be next stated, namely, His relation, (1) to the truth, "the faithful witness"; (2) to the world of the dead, from which He was the first to rise in resurrection life, and which as "firstborn" He owns and controls (ver. 18); (3) to the nations, for He is their overlord by the Father's appointment (Ps 2). Thus He is Prophet, Priest, and King. His relationship to His people is declared specially: He loved and liberated them, and constituted them to be a kingdom of priests, to the everlasting glory of His God and Father.

Here is outlined all the book. (1) The nature and co-operation of the Godhead. (2) The throne that rules over all. (3) The mediatorial and redeeming work of Jesus Christ. (4) The present outflow of grace and peace to the churches. (5) The future sphere and service of the "saints of the high places" (Dn 7. 22); and further, (6) that coming of Jesus Christ with the clouds of heaven of which Daniel had been granted a vision (Dn 7. 13), which Christ appropriated to Himself (Mt 24. 29-31), and which will strike with terror all His foes. These are the themes which occupy and are illuminated by the *Revelation*, all directed to (7) the glory of God, for which end the universe was created and is governed.

SECTION II—THE GENERAL PLAN OF THE BOOK

It is now to be noted that the Introduction thus carries forward the mind to the actual coming of the Lord with the clouds of heaven, to deal visibly with the affairs of earth. We proceed to show that this is the terminal point of each of the series of visions down to c. 20. 6.

1. The Letters to the Seven Churches all conclude with a promise to the overcomers among the people of God. These promises fall for fulfilment at the personal return of Christ to set up His kingdom on earth. Not before then, but at that time will His people rule the nations with Him with a rod of iron (2. 27); not prior to His actual descent to the earth will He sit down on His throne or can they sit on theirs (3. 21). Only then will they reach the tree of life in the Paradise of God (2. 7), or receive the crown (2. 10, and see II Tm 4. 8, "at that day," and I Pt 5. 4, "when"). Only then will they eat of the manna hidden as yet

in the Holy of Holies above, or receive the white stone which denotes approval by the Lord of their having conquered in life's conflicts (2. 17). Only then will they walk about with the King in white, His chosen, personal companions (3. 4 : Hb 3. 14 : Rv 14. 4 ; 17. 14), and be as pillars with a permanent standing in the temple of His God (3. 12).

Thus the foreview of the Letters is not to a point of time prior to the rise of the Beast, leaving the churches thenceforth out of sight, but they look right on to the same point as does the Introduction, the establishment of the kingdom at the descent of the King. This is very material to a right conception of the whole book, as will be seen later.

2. *The Vision of the Thrones and the Lamb* (cs. 4, 5). The commencing point of this vision is the setting up of that great heavenly assize when God will take His place in the assembly of the angels, as on previous such occasions (Ps 82. 1 : Jb 1. 6 : I Kn 22. 19), and a court will be held to wind up the Gentile domination of the earth and transfer it to Christ : "The judgment shall be set" to take away and to consume the dominion of the beast (Dn 7. 26, 27). The close of the vision carries the mind forward to the point where the heavenly kingdom of priests "reign upon the earth" (5. 9) and all created beings are constrained, willingly or unwillingly, to exalt the Father and the Son (Ph 2. 10, 11 : Is 45. 23).

3. *The Seven Seals*. This series connects with that point in the last vision where the Lamb takes the roll of judgment out of the hand of Him who sits on the throne (5. 7). It is the rise, progress, and doom of the Beast that the Seals portray, and the last but one (6. 12) introduces the signs that Christ said should follow immediately after the Great Tribulation (Mt 24. 29). Then follows the sealing of the godly of Israel that they may be hidden in the day of Jehovah's anger, and then is given the rapture to heaven of those saints who have suffered for Christ during the Tribulation. The last Seal (8. 1) is to be explained from the OT (see c. VI, to follow), and it likewise brings the Seals down to the actual descent of the Lord to the earth to destroy the wicked and to establish His kingdom.

4. *The Seven Trumpets* (8. 1—11. 19). Under the last trumpet the "mystery of God" is completed (10. 7), and the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Anointed (11. 15) ; for then has the Almighty taken His great power, the godly dead have been vindicated and rewarded, while the destroyers of the earth have been destroyed (11. 17, 18).

5. *The Woman, the Dragon, the Beast, and the Lamb* (cs. 12 ;

13 ; 14). The closing scene of this series is that the vintage of the earth is trodden down outside of the city of Jerusalem in "the winepress, the great winepress of the wrath of God" (14. 19). This is further set forth in 19. 15, where the Word of God, with the armies of heaven, descends to crush the Beast and his armies, to smite the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron (Ps 2. 8, 9 : Rv 2. 26, 27) ; in the doing of which He "treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty" (comp. Is 63. 3).

6. *The Seven Bowls* (cs. 15 ; 16). These final plagues, which finish the wrath of God (15. 1), end at the same point as the preceding visions. Under the sixth, the armies of the Beast are mobilized for the last battle, Har Magedon. Under the seventh all is done (16. 17), the final judgments are poured out, and Babylon the Great, the capital city of the Beast, is destroyed. According to the prophets this last is to take place in direct connection with the deliverance of Israel, in the day that Jehovah shall give them rest from their age-long sorrow and trouble (Is cs. 13 ; 14 : Jr cs. 50 ; 51).

7. *Babylon the Harlot, Babylon the City, and the Kingdom* (17—20. 6). The religious system that started in Babylon soon after the Flood, and will centre there again at the time of the End (Jr 51. 7 : Zh 5. 11), is first destroyed by the Beast and his confederate kings before he reaches world-supremacy and in order that he may do so (17. 16, 17). But the city Babylon is destroyed towards the close of his reign, to the great grief of the kings (18. 9), which two details prove that this city and its overthrow is a quite distinct event from that previous destruction of the Woman in which they had heartily co-operated. There is then joy and praise in heaven, and the hour arrives for the union in heavenly glory of the Lamb and His wife. Thereafter He comes forth, the Beast is destroyed, Satan is imprisoned, and Christ and the faithful of His people sit on thrones and reign.

This brief sketch may suffice to show that, though the various series of visions start at various points, and each traces a separate set of events happening through the same period, yet each ends at one and the same event, the coming of Christ in glory to establish the kingdom of God on earth. Thus the *Revelation* is the elaborating of that supreme crisis and climax to which all the Scripture looks and leads, as it is written (Ps 96. 11 ; 97. 1) :

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice . . .
Before Jehovah, for He cometh ;
For He cometh to judge the earth :

He will judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples with His truth.
Jehovah reigneth ; let the earth rejoice ;
Let the multitude of isles be glad.

The Book closes with a brief notice of events to follow the kingdom era : a fresh revolt on earth, and the final judgment, which leads on into eternal ages, with new heavens and new earth (20. 7—21. 9). There follows a vision of the glories and offices of the heavenly company, the wife of the Lamb, under the figure of a city. The Book is concluded by an epilogue containing various exhortations, promises, and warnings, even as it opened with a brief prologue.

From the literary point of view the *Revelation* is thus a finished work, and a fitting finish to the whole of Holy Scripture, nor could any other book of the Bible be this.

CHAPTER II

THE VISION OF THE SON OF MAN (i. 9-20)

How magnificent is the present personal appearance of the Son of man ! In the days of His sojourn here John had known Him intimately, had lain upon His breast. After His resurrection also John had enjoyed free intercourse with His Lord. Yet a glimpse of His heavenly glory, though but in a vision, struck him to the ground as if dead.

It is this majestic One who walks amidst the churches on earth, His flaming eyes searching into all hearts, perceiving all ways and all works ; His reproving words, as a sword, ready to smite evil in His people ; but His long robe telling of His powerful intercession for their help as the royal priest. How solemn to be perpetually under that piercing gaze ; how perilous to dare that two-edged sword, with which He reprobates and chastens ; how encouraging that the humble may count unreservedly upon the illimitable resources of Him in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead.

Reverent fear and courageous faith should mark His people. The loyal subject may verily approach boldly to the person of the sovereign whom he loves and serves, but let him not presume to call the king by his personal name, but rather say, Your Majesty ! Biblical writers sometimes speak of Him by the name known to history, but even when He was here in humility no disciple ever spoke *to* Him by His name Jesus. They said, Teacher, and Lord, and, My Lord and my God ! How much less would such undue familiarity have been possible to John when prostrate before His glory. It were well to banish or alter all hymns that so offend.

But neither need the godly know terror in His presence : " He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear Not ! " The scene and its effects upon John are to be compared with Ek 1 and 2 and Dn 10 ; but the revelation which the Son of man gives of Himself to John exceeds aught that had been possible of old and is more noteworthy. It constituted a challenge to the false worship that filled the world. The Lord claimed for himself certain divine attributes, peculiar experiences, and supreme powers which from most ancient times the whole heathen world had attributed to one of their chief deities. Christ's words were

a denial of the claims of the demon god and an assertion of His own exclusive right to the honour given to it. The converted heathen of Asia Minor to whom John was to transmit the message could scarcely have failed to grasp this its significance.

The myth challenged can be best seen in its early Egyptian form. It was said that Osiris, the sun god, was the first king of Egypt and its beneficent instructor in agriculture and other useful knowledge. But he was murdered by his odious brother Set. Their sister, the goddess Isis, however, restored Osiris to life. But the supreme gods of heaven deemed it inadvisable that he should resume his rule on earth, exposed to the malice of Set, and they therefore appointed him to be the ruler of the underworld of the dead.

The realities to which this pointed Christ assumes to Himself, saying : (1) "I am the First and the Last, and the Living One," the true God from whom all creatures derive all benefits ; (2) "I became dead," by surrendering (though willingly) to the malice of God's enemy, Satan ; (3) and yet, "behold, I am living unto the ages of the ages" in resurrection energy ; and (4) it is "I have the keys of death and of Hades," the supreme control of that underworld to which I descended as one of the dead : it is I who can banish thereto, can order the experiences of the soul while there, and can release therefrom.

This is one instance of many where great truths lie at the heart of some beliefs of the ancient world ; obscured, distorted, misapplied, but there. Perchance they are the corrupted remembrance of knowledge of the purposes of God given to man in earliest times that he might expect by faith God's promised Deliverer and Ruler, who should be of heaven, yet man on earth. When under Satanic deceit he was led to renounce the true and holy God (Rm 1), the arch-deceiver seems to have taught him to misapply the facts he knew of that other world and the hopes which should have been set on the Seed of the woman. Faith, fear, worship, and hope were thus misdirected, and "the things which the Gentiles sacrificed they sacrificed to demons, and not to God" (I Cr 10. 20).

It would be profitable were someone well versed in both Scripture and mythology to follow out in detail any correspondences between the two. We can only touch here upon some points connected with our present theme of the control by the Lord Jesus of the realm of the dead. The Egyptian was taught (and from them the Greek peoples learned much) :

i. That following upon death he must be tried before the judgment seat of Osiris. There is sufficient scripture to show

that a judgment of the Lord is the next experience after death. "It is laid up for man once to die and *after this judgment*" (Hb 9. 27). The words do not suggest a long interval, but rather the reverse. The souls under the altar (Rv 6. 9-11), though not yet raised from the dead, had been adjudicated upon by Christ, for the sign of His approval (the white robe, comp. 3. 4, 5 and 19. 8) was already granted to them. Who determined to which side of the underworld Dives and Lazarus should respectively go? So solemn a matter of justice could not be left to chance: some one must have so decided and ordered, and "the Father has given all judgment unto the Son" (Jn 5. 22). The figure of the athletic contest is to the same effect, for the judge of necessity and automatically forms his judgment as each runner or wrestler finishes his course or contest.

The giving of the prizes is another matter. This is deferred until the whole of the games are concluded. It will be "in that *the day*" that Paul will receive his crown (II Tm 4. 8). But the Judge does not put off His decision till then. In the nature of the case how could Paul, the runner, have been so sure that he had won his crown unless the Judge had so intimated, in his case even before death. The entire deferring of the judgment seat of Christ to one session at the end of the age is unreasonable and unfounded. That judgment seat is always in session. Even in this life conscience arraigns us before it, and already we are *judged* and chastened of the Lord (I Cr 11. 32).

This consideration opens out a wide and fascinating sphere for investigation, but we cannot now pursue it. But Paul says that the perfecting of the saints at Philippi will be continued by Him who had begun in them His work "until the day of Jesus Christ," not merely till the day of their death (Ph 1. 6). The subject is opened more fully in my *Firstfruits and Harvest*.

2. The Egyptian was taught that the decision of Osiris would be based upon his life on earth, virtuous or vicious. The judgment of the Lord also, at whatever session, is based upon works done (II Cr 5. 10; Rv 20. 13).

3. It was taught that before Osiris the heart of the deceased was weighed in the scales of justice against a feather. If it was the lighter it was known that he had been virtuous; if it was the heavier this proved that he was laden with sins. Thus also we read that "Jehovah is a God of knowledge, by Him actions are *weighed*," and again, "Jehovah *weigheth the spirits*" (I Sm 2. 3: Pv 16. 2). Solemn considerations are these, of great moral weight.

4. In view of this, the Egyptian was taught certain prayers

he was to offer before Osiris, denying major vices and recounting major virtues, according to the Egyptian code, and concluding with the prayer that he might be admitted to the halls of Osiris and not be cast into "the second death, the lake of fire." This, be it noted, is from mythology two or three millenniums before John saw the visions and wrote of the lake of fire.

To one, even though he be a believer, whose heart is loaded with jealousy, bitterness, covetousness, or other guilt, it is a solemn reflection that in the world of the dead the Lord can visit his misdeeds upon him; but to the saint, like John, it is a relief from all dread of death to know that Christ holds the keys of Death and Hades. To such the Judge says, Fear not!

A difficulty hitherto insuperable has faced those who saw that the judgment seat of Christ as taught in Scripture would involve chastisement for Christians who deserve it, and not only rewards for the faithful. In *Touching the Coming of the Lord* (84, 85), Hogg and Vine affirm their persuasion as to this, but honestly admit that they do not see by what means it can be fulfilled upon saints already, according to their scheme, raised from the dead and robed in bodies of glory. We think no solution of this problem ever could be found, and that the factors of the problem must be wrong.

Again, writers like G. H. Pember and others, who saw clearly that certain carnal believers would not be permitted to share the kingdom with the Lord, but who retained the general belief in one session of the judgment seat to follow the coming of Christ, were faced with the equally great difficulty that they had to suppose these unworthy persons raised from the dead to appear at that session, and then, being adjudged unworthy of the kingdom, returning to the death state till after the millennial era, to be raised then unto life eternal, but having forfeited the kingdom. But this involves the impossibility of bodies raised in immortality and incorruptibility becoming subject to corruption, an even greater difficulty than the former.

But granted that the judgment seat of Christ for the dead takes place after death and before resurrection and both difficulties are seen to be, like all our other difficulties, the result of want of knowledge and the consequent use of imagination to fill up the gaps in knowledge. For the question then is not whether persons raised from the dead deserve to be chastened, even unto being sent back to Hades, but the much simpler question whether the Lord will deem this or that one worthy of the first resurrection at all. If not, such will simply remain as and where they are after death until the second resurrection, and those alone will be

raised whom He accounts worthy (Lk 20. 35). Here also see *Firstfruits and Harvest*.

The influencing of earthly affairs by heavenly agents, all under the control of Christ, is a mighty fact, both comforting and warning. The glorious Lord who walks amidst the lampstands as Head of the churches has also the "seven stars in His right hand." The angel watchers, defenders, helpers, servants of the churches are under His authority and His power.

We see no reason for not taking "angels" here as it is to be taken everywhere else in this *Revelation*, and in the vast majority of other places in the New Testament, as meaning heavenly (and here, holy) spirits. The little children have their individual angel representatives (Mt 18. 10). The early disciples believed that Peter had an attendant angel (Ac 12. 15). Great nations have their angel rulers (Dn 10. 13, 20, 21; 12. 1; Ek 28. 12). The Lord here speaks of each church having such a responsible angel servant.

No accurate meaning of very much scripture can be gained unless this (to us) great invisible world be beheld in its co-ordination with this visible world. God's kingdom, as He sees it, is *one* ordered realm. This is true of both its obedient and its rebel spheres. It is for us thus to see it by faith; and seeing it, to be encouraged and solemnized. "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them . . . Lord . . . open his eyes that he may see" (II Kn 6. 16, 17). Dothan is everywhere. By faith let each be as Elisha, not as his servant. Yet, on the other side, it is written: "Behold, I send an angel before thee . . . provoke him not: for he will not pardon your transgression" (Ex 23. 20, 21). To pardon is not the prerogative of an angel; which shows, incidentally, that *that* angel was not the Son of God.

Closely considered it is no more extraordinary that John should bring the Lord's message to angels than that angels should bring His message to John. For (1) John was "in spirit" (1. 10), that is, his consciousness had been freed from earth limitations and transferred to the spirit realm (comp. II Cr 12. 1-4: Eph 3. 5, in which latter place, as in Rv 1. 10, there is no article), so that his spirit held free intercourse with spirit beings: and (2) as to his messages when written down being addressed to angels, what is there difficult in this seeing that such beings can read the Scriptures and quote them? (Lk 4. 9-11). If the Lord so see fit they might as well receive His mind upon their service in this way as in any other way.

Note on μετὰ ταῦτα meta tauta “after these things.”

(i) 19. “Write therefore the things (a) which thou sawest, and (b) the things which are, and (c) the things which shall come to pass *hereafter*” (*meta tauta*).

On this triple sentence a scheme of interpretation has been built. (a) means the vision of the Son of Man just given (c. 1). This is no doubt correct. (b) is the Seven Letters, covering the whole era of the church of God on earth down to its rapture before the End Times and the rise of Antichrist (cs. 2 and 3). (c) is the End period to follow that removal of the church (c. 4 and onward).

This scheme breaks down upon the fact, shown on pp. 73, 74, that the foreview of the Letters does not end at a point prior to the End Times, but goes on to the beginning of the Kingdom, when the Overcomers are to sit with Christ on His throne. Therefore “after these things” cannot mean that the judgments of the End *follow* the period contemplated by the Letters, for these look on to beyond the close of those judgments.

Meta tauta must here mean “hereafter,” as our Versions, i.e., in the future viewed from the time when John was seeing the visions. The coming unveiling was not to be history but prophecy.

(ii) 4. 1. “*After these things* I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must come to pass *hereafter*” (*meta tauta*). This does not say, as the above scheme implies, “after these things just mentioned there shall happen.” It says, “after these things *I saw*.” John had not seen the sitting down of Christ upon His throne and the events to accompany, for these had not yet happened, not even in vision: he had heard only a promise that they should happen. *Meta tauta* means therefore that the visions following were seen after he had been shown the vision of the Son of Man and had heard His words given in the Letters.

(iii) Therefore, as in 1. 19, the second *meta tauta* in this verse will mean simply “hereafter,” at some time in the future from the present hour in which you are seeing and hearing the visions. This must be so seeing that the things he was now to be shown—the judgments down to the coming forth of the Word of God, c. 19—were all to occur prior to the point of time to which the Letters had carried forward his mind, the sitting of Christ on His throne.

(iv) 7. 1. *meta touto* (sing). “*After this I saw*”; i.e., the vision of the four angels standing on the four corners of the earth was seen after the vision of Seal 6.

(v) 7. 9. “After these things I saw”; i.e., the vision of the great multitude was seen after the vision of the sealing of the 144,000 of Israel.

(vi) 9. 12. “The first Woe is past: behold, there come yet two Woes *hereafter*” (*meta tauta*). The sense must be “hereafter” as certainly as that second and third must follow first.

(vii) 15. 5. “*After these things I saw*”; i.e., I saw the temple in heaven opened, and the seven angels come out, after I had seen the Victors standing by the glassy sea.

(viii) 18. 1. “*After these things I saw*”; i.e., I saw this other angel descend after I had seen the vision of the Woman.

(ix) 19. 1. “*After these things I heard*”; i.e., the great voice followed the description of the destruction of Babylon.

(x) 20. 3. “*After these things* [not ‘this,’ as RV, or ‘that’ AV] he [Satan] must be loosed”; i.e., after his arrest and imprisonment just mentioned.

These ten are all the places where *meta tauta* (once *touto*) are found in this book. They divide into three classes.

1. In nos. ii, iv, v, vii, viii, ix *meta tauta*, being followed by “I saw” or “I heard,” means that the seeing or hearing took place later than the things just before mentioned were seen or heard; but the expression does not *by itself* settle that the events will *occur* later than those just before seen. This must be otherwise determined.

2. In instances vi and x it is stated that the events will *occur* after the events just before mentioned.

3. In i and iii *meta tauta* means simply “hereafter,” at some time in the future.

In this view the triple sentence will mean: (a) the Lord in the midst of the churches; (b) the state of the seven churches as seen by the Lord; (c) things future, to close the age for Israel, the nations, and the churches simultaneously.

CHAPTER III

THE SEVEN LETTERS, CHAPTERS 2 AND 3

SECTION I.—THE LETTERS

I. There are three aspects under which these letters may be considered.

1. As a description by the Lord of the state of seven churches of believers then existing.

2. As a prophetic foreview of the christian age then commenced and to conclude at the coming of the Lord.

3. As a revelation of the moral characteristics of churches found always throughout the age.

1. The first aspect is so obvious as not to be questioned. But there were other churches of God then on earth, and some in the neighbourhood of these seven: why then were these in particular addressed? and why was their spiritual state as seen by Christ made known to all, and throughout all the age? There seems no sufficient reason except that the state of these reveals the possible state of each and all, severally and collectively, at all times. That seven, the number of completeness is chosen, itself suggests this.

2. But in addition it has been widely held that these seven, in the order employed, foreshadowed a progressive development of the church of God throughout the whole age. It is held that seven chief moral conditions have marked the church age, corresponding to the features seen in these seven churches. In *The Great Prophecies concerning the Church*, c. ix, G. H. Pember argued in favour of this view, as follows.

(1) The first Letter (Ephesus) reveals the *beginning* of declension in the waning of first love, and the last (Laodicea) shows the *final* outcome of this in rejection by the Lord; which suggests the probability that intervening letters depict consecutive intervening stages.

(2) That the meaning of the name of each church corresponds to the historic feature of the stage assigned to each.

(3) That the history of the christian age has in fact followed the stages thus obscurely outlined in advance.

On the other hand, Archbishop Trench (*Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches*, *Excursus*) has given a summary of

the history of this interpretation, and offers these reasons against it.

(a) The Letters themselves contain no hint of a prophetic-periodic sense.

(b) The scheme is not known to the apostolic, the post-apostolic, or even the following sub-apostolic age. Such early and long-prevailing ignorance of this meaning is difficult to understand if it had really been known to and imparted by the apostle, or by those who knew him and had learned from him.

(c) The advocates of this interpretation vary greatly among themselves in their distribution of the periods, examples of which divergence are given.

(d) That as matter of fact there is no truly accurate correspondence of Letters and periods. Dr. Trench does not hesitate to speak of the "arbitrary and artificial character of all the attempted adaptations of Church history to these Epistles."

Doubtless much can be said on both sides, and the curious reader may weigh the arguments in such works as those cited. But we deem the question of no great importance, more especially for such as may live as the age ends. The third view is that which matters.

3. The urgent weighty aspect of the Letters Pember well indicated (498). He pointed out that "a phase that has once commenced may be continued until the Lord's return . . . Indeed, the Nominal Churches will, probably, in their last days, as in their first, embrace communities which, taken together, will exhibit all the characteristics mentioned in the two chapters ; so that each of the epistles will retain its practical value until the End." And so Trench : "The warnings, the incentives, the promises, the consolations, and generally, the whole instruction in righteousness in these contained, are for every one in all times, so far as they meet the several cases and conditions of men ; what Christ says to those here addressed He says to all in similar conditions . . . the great Head of the Church contemplates them for the time being as symbolic of His universal Church."

II. Each Letter is addressed to its responsible angel representative. Thus he became informed of the Lord's views of the state of the sphere allotted to his charge. In the administration of a kingdom communications from the sovereign concerning a local region are ever directed to the appointed head of that region, even though in its terms the document may address itself to those under him. "It is quite futile to attempt to distinguish in these epistles what is said to the Angel in the singular, and what is

said to the Church in the plural. This is shown by the former part of this verse (2. 10)—*the things thou art about to suffer . . . followed by some of you*. Only where there is occasion to discriminate is the plural used: cf. verse 24 f: but wherever the whole church is spoken of it is in the singular, under the person of its representative angel.” (Alford.) For reasons for taking “angel” to mean a heavenly being see p. 81.

1. *The Speaker* emphasizes to each church those of His own powers, attributes, and experiences which most befit the state of that church.

Ephesus He reminds of His absolute control of these angel protectors and watchers of the churches: He “holds the seven stars in His right hand,” and can support, restrain, or withdraw that so needful, so valuable angel ministry (Hb 1. 11). How very much this means to the people of God is but very little appreciated by most, for the whole subject of angelic office and service in God’s great empire is practically unknown by His children, to their great loss. In the world, royal princes would be deemed sadly unqualified for their position and duties if they had no adequate acquaintance with the various services, civil and military, by which the kingdom was administered.

The Lord also walks amidst the lampstands, and has close personal, constant observation of their state, even to detecting the condition of the heart, and not only the outward appearances: “thou hast left thy first love.”

Smyrna is about to meet severe tribulation which will demand faithfulness even unto death. Their Lord reminds them that He too has endured unto death, can therefore sympathize and succour, and bring them also into the resurrection life that he has reached.

Pergamum is infected with evil ways and teaching, and may provoke the use of His sharp two-edged sword. How dreadful that He should have to take the field against some within the churches. Who can hope to survive such a conflict? (Comp. Is 63. 10).

Thyatira is permeated with the *deep* things of Satan, but as a flame of fire the Lord’s eyes burn their way into all the hidden regions and detect the most subtle evils; and His feet burnished as in a furnace proclaim that that only can stand which can stand the fire of judgment.

Sardis is a corpse, flesh-tinted, but without vitality. Yet Christ has the plentitude of the Spirit to revitalize the repentant, and He has also the full reserve of angelic ministry for chastening, protection, succour, and all other needful spiritual service in the realms invisible where Satan attacks the saints.

Philadelphia is feeble but faithful. He that is holy recognizes it ; He that is true will be true to those that are so to Him ; He who opens and who shuts will keep open a door for testimony to those that are ready to testify.

Laodicea is pretentious but unfaithful : He is the opposite, even the Amen, the One in Whom all is sure ; He is the faithful and true Witness, and if they are faithless toward Him He must be faithful to His Word and to Himself, and will deny them who deny Him (Mt 10. 32, 33 : Lk 12. 8, 9 : II Tm 2. 11-13), for otherwise He would deny Himself, which cannot be. He it is who gave beginning to the creation of God, and all continuance depends upon continual dependence upon Him who at first created.

2. Thus is there in the exalted Christ that which can meet every condition and every need of His people in their witness as lights in the world (Mt 5. 14-16 : Ph 2. 14-16). To abide in fellowship with Him is both indispensable and sufficient for testimony in this kingdom of darkness. The translation *candlestick* (AV), is not only questionable but, to our great loss, it misses a most needful lesson given by *lampstand* (RV), and which lesson is the very point which John had heard Christ stress in the parable of the virgins (Mt 25) ; for the candlestick is self-contained, and needs no regular renewing with oil, as does the lamp. To promote heart-independence of Christ is a steady object with Satan. He knows that the lamps cannot burn if the pipes from the olive trees be cut or blocked (Zh 4). That we should abide in Christ is His own urgent exhortation (Jn 15 : I Jn 3. 28 : etc.), and our urgent need and responsibility. It is secured by habitual obedience to His words (Jn 15. 9, 10), and not otherwise. Given such obedience believers and churches will find experimentally that they are indeed made full in Him, the Head, in whom dwells all the divine fulness (Cl 2. 8-10). To them philosophy can add nothing, but can only despoil them, and ritual can only sever them from the Head to whom they need to hold fast, to their inevitable impoverishment and withering (Cl 2. 16-19). But through the knowledge of Christ they gain all things requisite to life and godliness (II Pt 1. 3) ; and, by daily renewing of the Holy Spirit, the heavenly oil, they can fulfil their privileged office of lampstands, to the blessing of the world. A lamp is useless unless it gives light, and a Christian unless he displays Christ.

III. Note on c. 3. 10 and Lk 21. 34-36.

These two passages require particular examination as fundamental to some parts of the exposition of the *Revelation*.

1. Luke 21 is a record of instruction given by Christ to four

apostles on the Mount of Olives. The following remarks are taken from pp. 37-40 of my *Firstfruits and Harvest*.

The chapter is a parallel report to Mt 24 and 25 and Mk 13, and it deals specifically with the End Times and the Parousia. Christ foretold great international wars, accompanied with earthquakes, famines, and pestilences, to be followed by terrors and great signs from heaven (ver. 10, 11; comp. Seals 1-4, Rv 6). These things are to be preceded by a general persecution of His followers (ver. 12), which will be the first indication that the End Days are at hand. Then Jerusalem is to be trodden down by the Gentiles right on until the Times of the Gentiles run out (ver. 24; comp. Rv 11. 2, where the same term "trodden down" is used, and Zh 14. 1-5). This shows that it is the End Times of which the Lord was speaking, as is further shown by His earlier statement that at that time of vengeance "all things that are written" shall be fulfilled. *All* things that are written in the prophets concerning Jerusalem, Israel, and the Gentiles were not by any means fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This point is more fully discussed in c. XII.

Christ then mentioned the disturbances in nature and the fears of mankind which are grouped under Seal 6 in Rv 6. 12-17, and added explicitly that "*then* shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory," and that when these things begin His disciples may know that their redemption draweth nigh (ver. 27, 28).

In concluding this outline of the period of the Beast the Lord then uttered this exhortation and promise: "But take heed to yourselves, lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare: for so shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of all the earth. But watch ye at every season, making supplication that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

This declares distinctly: (1) That escape is possible from all those things of which Christ had been speaking, that is, from the whole End Times. (2) That that day of testing will be universal, and inevitable by any then on earth, which involves the removal from the earth of any who are to escape it. (3) That those who are to escape will be taken to where He, the Son of Man, will then be, that is at the throne of the Father in the heavens. They will stand before Him there. (4) That there is a fearful peril of disciples becoming worldly in heart and so being enmeshed in that last period. (5) That hence it is needful to watch, and to

pray ceaselessly, that so we may prevail over all obstacles and dangers and thus escape that era.

This most important and unequivocal statement by our Lord sets aside the opinion that all Christians will escape irrespective of their moral state, and also negatives the notion that no escape is possible. There is a door of escape: but as with all doors, only those who are awake will see it, and only those who are in earnest will reach it before the storm bursts. In every place in the NT the word "escape" has its natural force—*ekphēugo*, to flee out of a place or trouble and be quite clear thereof. It comes only at Lk 21. 36: Ac 16. 27; 19. 16: Rm 2. 3: II Cr 11. 33: I Th 5. 3: Hb 2. 3; 12. 25. In comparison with Rm 2. 3 see its use in the LXX in the interpolated passage after Es 8. 13: "they suppose that they shall *escape* the sin-hating vengeance of the ever-seeing God"; also Jg 6. 11: Jb 15. 30: Pv 10. 19; 12. 13. The sense is invariably as stated. It never means to endure the trial successfully. In this very discourse of the Lord it is in contrast with the statement, "He that *endureth* (*hupomeno*) to the end [of these things] the same shall be saved" (Mt 24. 13). One escapes, another endures.

The attempt to evade the application of this passage to Christians on the plea that it refers to "Jewish" disciples of Christ is baseless. (a) No "Jewish" disciples of Christ are known to the Scriptures (Gl 3. 28: Eph 2. 14-18). (b) The God-fearing Remnant of Israel of the End Days will in no wise escape these things that shall come to pass (Ml 3. 1-4: Zh 13. 8, 9: Jr 30. 7, 8). (c) Nor will they believe on Jesus as their Messiah until they see Him coming in glory (Zh 12. 9, 10; 13. 6: Mt 24. 30). (d) The assertion that the title Son of Man is "Jewish" is equally unwarranted, for the term "man" is necessarily universal to the race, and does not belong peculiarly to any one nation. Comp. Jn 3. 14, 15; 5. 25-29; "whosoever" and "all."

2. In harmony with this utterance of our Lord is His further statement to the church at Philadelphia (Rv 3. 10): "Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from (*ek*) the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole inhabited earth, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Here also are declared: (a) The universality of that hour of trial, so that any escape from it must involve removal; (b) the promise of being kept from it; (c) the intimation that such preservation is the consequence of a certain moral condition: "Because thou didst keep . . . I also will keep." As this is addressed to a church no question of a "Jewish" application can arise. Nor do the Scriptures or known facts allow of the supposition that every

Christian keeps the word of Christ's patience (Mt 24. 12 : Rv 2, 5 ; Gl 6. 12 : Cl 4. 14, with II Tm 4. 10 concerning Demas) ; so that this promise cannot be stretched to mean all believers.

In *The Bible Treasury*, 1865, p. 380, there is an instructive note by J. N. Darby (see also *Coll. Writ.*, vol. 13, Critical, I. 581) on the difference between *ἀπό* (*apo*) and *ἐκ* (*ek*). The former regards hostile *persons* and being delivered from them, the latter refers to a *state* and being kept from getting into it. On Rv 3. 10 he wrote : "So in Rv 3 the faithful are kept from getting into this state, preserved from getting into it, or, as we say, kept out of it. For the words here answer fully to the English 'out of' or 'from.'" This distinction is sound, but it is to be observed that the verse does not speak of being kept out of a *state*. That the thought is not that of being kept from being injured in soul by certain trials is implied in the expression "Keep thee out of *that hour*" ; it is from the period of time itself that the faithful are to be kept, not merely from its spiritual perils.

It has been thought that Jn 17. 15 supports the view that *ἐκ* (*ek*) may mean being kept from a spiritual danger. It reads : "I ask not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world (*ek tou kosmou*), but that shouldest keep them from the evil one" (*ek tou ponerou*). But if the thought be fully grasped this is not the sense. The "world" is the realm *in* which the disciple passes his outward life in the body ; to be "taken *out of it*" means as to bodily presence. Now Satan is regarded in the Word as the moral realm *in* which men pass their existence as to the spirit : "the whole world lieth *in* the evil one" (I Jn 5. 19). But by the power of God the inner life of the believer is regarded as "translated *out of* the authority of darkness *into* the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Cl 1. 13), and now his inner life is "*in* Christ Jesus" as the sphere of its new existence. Thus the thought of being "kept out of the evil one" is exactly the same as being kept *out of* any other realm, that is, of not being in it in any sense, but out of it. The disciple is not to regard himself as *in* the Evil One and to ask to be kept from injury from that evil sphere, but as *out of it*, and he is to pray to be kept from ever again getting into it experimentally.

Of this escape and preservation there are two pictures, as there are these two promises. These will be considered under cs. 12 and 14, when dealing with the Man-child and the Firstfruits.

It may aid meditation to see the Letters set out in the form given at the end of the book.

SECTION II—ON OVERCOMING

I. *On the word Overcome.*

The simple meaning of this term is to conquer, win the victory, whether in a law suit (Rm 3. 4), in war (Rv 6. 2), in moral battles (Rm 12. 21), or in spiritual conflict (I Jn 2. 13, 14). The noun, in both its earlier form (*νίκη* I Jn 5. 4 only) and its later form (*νίκος* Mt 12. 20 : I Cr 15. 54, 55, 57 ; only) is always rendered *victory*. The verb (*νικάω*) is rendered in Rm 3. 4 by *prevail* ; in Rv 6. 2 by *conquer* and *conquering* ; in Rv 15. 2 by *victorious* ; and always elsewhere by *overcome* (Lk 11. 22 : Jn 16. 33 : Rm 12. 21 *bis* : I Jn 2. 13, 14 ; 4. 4 ; 5. 4 *bis*, 5 : Rv 2. 7, 11, 17, 26 ; 3. 5, 12, 21 *bis* ; 5. 5 ; 11. 7 ; 12. 11 ; 13. 7 ; 17. 14 ; 21. 7 ; only). The idea is invariable ; a contest ending in victory. So fixed was the meaning of the word that it became in early times the proper name of the goddess of Victory (*Νίκη*), to whom generals sacrificed after a victorious campaign.

The idea is part of the tremendous reality of that age-long conflict between God and Satan, in which all intelligent beings take part, on the one side or the other, in which the things material are employed by the one party or the other. This latter fact includes that the members of the body of man are “weapons” (*ὅπλα*), used to further the victory either of righteousness or of sin (Rm 6. 13), and therefore that they must be enslaved by the christian warrior lest they bring him defeat in the war (I Cr 9. 24-27).

The exceptional emphasis in *Revelation* on conquering agrees with this book being throughout militant in vision and tone as unveiling the final and fearful stages in the great campaign, leading on to the complete victory of God, of the Lamb, and of the followers of the Lamb.

The assertion that all believers are overcomers is so plainly contrary to fact and to Scripture that one wonders it ever has been made. It involves the false position that no believer can be a backslider. It avoids and nullifies the solemn warnings and urgent pleadings of the Spirit addressed to believers, and, by depriving the Christian of these, leaves him dangerously exposed to the perils they reveal.

In the house of the high priest Peter was defeated by the fear of man. Is he the last ? Ananias and Sapphira were defeated by the love of money and pride of reputation. Were they the last ? Demas forsook Paul, being overcome by the love of this present age. Was he the last ? In the Corinthian church some

were conquered by carnal lusts. Were they the last? Peter re-entered the battle and fought to the end. Ananias and his wife were cut off in their defeat. So were some of the Corinthian believers. We do not know that Demas won through finally.

If all Christians are conquerors how shall it be possible at the close of the age that "the love of the many [the majority] shall wax cold" (Mt 24. 12)? Overcomers are to receive crowns; but if all overcome how can any be warned lest he lose his crown? (Rv 3. 11).

But why labour to refute an assertion so plainly wrong, and made only in support of exegesis which cannot face the severe warnings of the Word? Yet notice further that the Seven Letters are addressed, first, to each church as a whole, through the guardian angel of each. But secondly, they have also a distributive aspect, that is, the members of each church are addressed severally: "some of you shall be cast into prison . . . and ye shall have tribulation" (2. 10): "I will make war against them" (2. 16): "I am He that searcheth the reins and the hearts [plural]: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works" (2. 23): "As many as I love I reprove and chasten" (3. 19).

In contrast to this corporate aspect and to these general statements the appeal for attention is pointedly personal: "The one having ears let him hear" ($\delta\ \epsilon\chi\omega\tau\ o\delta\ s\ \alpha\kappa\omega\sigma\delta\tau\omega$); and the promises to the overcomers are made in the same personal form, "To the one overcoming I will give" ($\tau\phi\ \nu\kappa\omega\nti$); "The one overcoming ($\delta\ \nu\kappa\omega\tau$) and the one keeping ($\delta\ \tau\eta\omega\tau$) unto the end my works, I will give to him ($a\delta\tau\phi$)"; and so in each Letter.

The overcomer therefore is singled out from the whole company who form the church. This is seen very clearly in the Letter to Sardis: "But thou hast a few names in Sardis who did not defile their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy. The one overcoming shall thus [as My reward that he so walked in white on earth] be arrayed in white." This contrast follows the manner of our Lord's statement in Mt 24. 12, 13, mentioned above: "the love of the many shall wax cold, but the one enduring unto the end, this one ($\omega\delta\tau\os$) shall be saved." And thus Paul also: "These things happened unto them typically, and they are written for our admonition . . . so then the one thinking he stands ($\delta\ \delta\omega\kappa\omega\tau\ \epsilon\tau\tau\alpha\tau\omega\tau$), let him take heed lest he fall" (I Cr 10. 11, 12). Now he who falls before the foe is not conquering. It is safe to accept humbly the exhortation and dangerous to avoid the warning.

The notion that all believers overcome destroys this regular

emphasis, and besides it calmly consigns to perdition as unbelievers the majority who formed the church at Sardis, and perhaps the majority of the churches of most times and places, certainly those of the End Days, as seen from Mt 24. 12 quoted.

The meaning and the means of overcoming will be shown later. See on the Man-child, c. VIII, p. 202 ff. For the final rewards of overcoming see on c. 21. 7.

II. *The Promises to the Overcomers.*

I. 2. 7. "*To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.*"

(i) *Paradise.* The word paradise meant a park or pleasure garden, not the dwelling house to which such might attach (Ec 2. 5 LXX). It was applied to the garden of Eden, as being a place of beauty and delight (LXX. Gn 2. 8; Ek 28. 13). Later it indicated that region of the underworld where the godly dead are at rest (Lk 23. 43). In our passage it points on to the upper world, where the overcomer shall find his blissful region : it is the paradise of *God*, not of Adam or of the earth.

In II Cr 12. 4 (the only other occurrence of the word in NT) Paul says that he was "caught away into the paradise," which, in view of the meaning of the word, does not mean the heaven of heavens where God has His own especial dwelling. The word "caught up" is not exact, for the Greek word *harpazo* does not in itself indicate the direction. Nor is it certain that by "the paradise" he means the third heaven to which he had been taken according to the verse preceding, because he had said (ver. 1) that he was about to speak of "visions," not of only one vision, whereas he did not mention more than one, unless the two are separate events.

The article "the paradise" does not require the sense of a region in the heavens, because Christ used it when he said to the thief "To-day shalt thou be with Me in the paradise" (Lk 23. 43), and it is beyond question that Christ did not go to the heavenly regions that day, but to Hades, in the "lower parts of the earth" (Ps 16. 10 : Ac 2. 27 : Eph 4. 9, 10). Therefore the blissful region of Hades "Abraham's bosom" (Lk 16. 22) was "the paradise." The assumption that its location was changed at the resurrection of Christ has no foundation. See my *Firstfruits and Harvest*, 56 ff.

(ii) *The Tree of Life.* In the Adamic Eden there was the tree of life, the eating of which would have enabled man to live on for ever in whatever state he was at the time of eating (Gn 3. 22). Man was not, and is not, immortal, that is, incapable of dying. As to his immaterial nature, the soul, he has endless existence,

but may exist consciously in a state of death, not of life. The promise to the overcomer is that he shall be granted perpetuity in life, shall be beyond further liability to die (Jn xi. 26). What a relief of spirit to one who still has the sentence of death in himself.

The conception that the tree of life would be made again available to man, only in a higher and nobler realm, existed from very ancient times. Thus in the *Book of the Dead* (trans. Budge, p. CXLIV) the deceased Egyptian is said to have reached the realm of the great gods, "and these great and imperishable beings give to him the tree of life, whereon they themselves do live, that he also may [eat and] live thereon." Is it not probable that this hope, going back certainly to soon after the Flood, was based on a remembrance of some promise of God, confused as to time and manner of fulfilment, but retained tenaciously as a consoling prospect in a world of death and disappointment? Now, by revelation of Jesus Christ to John, its true fulfilment is foretold.

And it is worthy of much notice that the Egyptians retained also the conviction that to arrive at those future felicities the soul must close its career victoriously, and so the constant description of the departed, who applies to the gods for admission to their high realms and fellowship, is "Nu, the chancellor in chief, *triumphant*." Here again the idea of what constituted victory had become debased, but its necessity was recognized.

The *water* of life is not acquired by the process of fighting a life-long battle and conquering at last. It is a *free* gift, imparting spiritual life to the spiritually dead, and it must have been received before, and in order to, the entering the conflict. Therefore in c. 21. 6, it precedes the promise that follows to the overcomer. Thus the water is the symbol of eternal life as contrasted with death, and is a gift free of conditions; but the *tree* points to the maintenance of that life; and for this, purity of conduct (washing the robes, 22. 14) and final victory are conditions precedent.

Perhaps hints as to this tree of life are found in Solomon's four references to it in *Proverbs*.

3. 18. "Wisdom is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her." Now it is "Christ Jesus who is made unto us wisdom from God" (I Cr i. 30). He is the true tree of life, and the one that feedeth upon Him hath eternal life. But as yet our apprehension of divine wisdom in Him is very imperfect, but in the future and

resurrection life it shall advance indefinitely : " now we know in part . . . then we shall know fully, even as we have been fully known " (I Cr 13. 12). But acquiring of knowledge and attaining a wise mind demands determined effort. Every hindrance thereto must be resisted strenuously and ceaselessly, for wisdom is a tree of life to them only that *lay hold* on her : it is the *overcomer* who eats of this tree, now and hereafter.

11. 30. " The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
And he that is wise winneth souls."

It is so even now. He who pre-eminently is the Righteous One is this tree, and they who eat of the fruit of His character, and of that " one act of righteousness " which He wrought on the cross (Rm 5. 18), find life in Him. Thereupon these in turn live and act in righteousness, He living and acting in them ; by which means they share His wisdom, which they show by winning souls, and so their fruit yields life to others. It shall be perfectly so hereafter. They shall partake so fully of what this Tree is that they shall win souls more abundantly. They do so now in measure by turning many to righteousness (Dn 12. 3), and they shall shine more brilliantly in this high service when their own apprehension of Christ shall have been perfected and so their wisdom increased. Considering how wholly dark the nations will be at the beginning of the Kingdom (Is 60. 2), there will be vast scope for this life-giving fruit-bearing.

13. 12. " Hope deferred maketh the heart sick,
But when the desire cometh it is a tree of life."

As yet the Christian is a prisoner of hope, and often cries, How long, O Lord ! But then every God-implanted desire shall have been realized beyond out utmost dreams of bliss, and eternally, and the life abundant be enjoyed to the utmost limit of the capacity of the renewed and liberated nature ;

And we, transfigured by His light,
Incomparably blessed,
Shall instant lose all sense of need,
And find in Christ life's goal indeed.
Eternal life possessed.

15. 4. " The healing of the tongue is a tree of life,
But perverseness therein is a breaking of the spirit."

Harsh words inflict deadly wounds, but gracious words heal them. It is by the word of God that new life is begotten in us ; it is by His words that health of soul is conferred and maintained (I Tm 1. 10 ; 6. 3, " healthful words "). This the overcomer shall experience fully in that day, and shall also display it

blessedly by his own words blessing others. For “death *and life* are in the power of the tongue ; and they that love it shall eat the fruit of it” (Pv 18. 21) : they shall eat death if they loved it, and spake death-dealing words ; but life, if they loved it, and spake life-giving words. Here, verily, is the most ceaseless and desperate of our battles, for nature finds the tongue a restless, untameable evil (Js 3. 1-12) ; but he that by incessant watchfulness and unceasing prayer overcomes this evil becomes a full-grown man of God, able to bridle the whole body, and as an overcomer he shall eat his fill of the Tree of life in the Paradise of God, and his words shall be for the healing of the nations.

2. 2. II. “*He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death !*”

The second death is having part in the lake of fire, as to which see on 20. 14. It is here declared that the overcomer runs no risk of this. But it is not safe to reverse divine statements and draw a negative inference from a positive statement, as is done by inferring here that a believer who does *not* overcome *will* be hurt of the second death. The condition of any person at death is known with certainty to the Lord alone, the only Judge. What He here does is to assure the one overcoming that *he* will not be hurt by the lake of fire, which is a powerful incentive to maintain the fight of faith.

It is true that the idea that carnal Christians may be chastened *temporarily* and sanctified in the lake of fire does not impinge on any vital doctrine of the faith, only it ought to be supported by far plainer testimony of Scripture than I have yet seen adduced. It is a less serious thought than that a believer may forfeit salvation entirely and be lost *eternally* in the lake of fire. This latter reduces *vastly* the *benefit* attaching to faith, yet it does not at all challenge the *vital* question, that of the ground of salvation being solely the atoning work of the Redeemer. As those who thus teach may yet be true servants of God, and, in spite of this opinion, entitled to the fellowship of His house into which He has received them, so are they to be regarded and treated who hold the lesser view in question. But exposition of the promise before us should stay at its positive and blessed force.

Only it must be remarked with emphasis that the guarantee of immortality, with consequent security from the second death, has been often, perhaps generally, offered by preachers on far easier terms than are here indicated. These high assurances are given to those overcoming in the battles of the Lord, not to mere assent to certain texts and doctrines, not to a profession which

consists with love of this present age, which indulges its ambitions or carnal desires, which basks in its smiles, fears its frowns, and succumbs to its threats.

3. 2. 17. “*To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.*”

(i) *The Hidden Manna.* The “hidden manna” seems to be a reference to the pot of manna which was kept in the most holy place in the Tabernacle as evidence for subsequent generations of the miraculous sustenance supplied to Israel in the wilderness (Ex 16. 32-34 : Hb 9. 4). Now that manna was a type of the Son of God as the true food of His people (Jn 6). The promise here, then, is that He who is the life of the soul, by which we live and fight in this present wilderness experience, will be still the life and strength of His people in the ages to come ; and that those who conquer the perils of the desert will enjoy Christ hereafter in a degree not known before nor to be known by all. There are secret things which belong to the Lord our God ; there is a richness and sweetness and fulness of life in Christ, tasted indeed here by such as walk as pilgrims, and hereafter to be enjoyed by them fully in His secret place, the very tabernacle of His presence on high.

Why, as we feast upon the Food of God,
Will thought unbid retrace the way we trod ?
This Bread that feeds us through eternal years
We ate on earth, oft moistened by our tears.

(ii) *The white stone and the new name.* Of the many suggestions as to the origin of this figure none is conclusive. Perhaps the best is that it is based on the profound respect for the names of the gods then entertained by men in general, and the marvellous powers supposed to be conferred by the understanding of those names. Amulets inscribed with such a name were believed to be potent for the good of the holder. Thus in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* (c. XCIX) more than thirty gods demand of the deceased that he tell to each his name ; and upon his ability to do this depended his well-being and his influence in the world beyond. If the name on the amulet was exceptional, and known only to the holder, it was believed to confer on him exceptional advantages.

But whatever be the allusion, some ideas here connected are obvious. A stone suggests something imperishable, a permanent privilege, something that “fadeth not away” with lapse of time

(I Pt 1. 4). Its whiteness (the word means brilliant white, not dull white) suggests glory, splendour. The name being engraved conveys again the thought of something indelible, unalterable, permanent. That it is a *name*, represents the nature, character, influence of the person whose name is used, and the holder acquires the right to use that name to his advantage. Compare the repeated grant of His name made by the Lord to His disciples (Jn 14-16), and the further privilege, "I made known unto them Thy name and will make it known" (Jn 17. 26). This privilege will be continued, and no doubt enlarged, with enlargement of knowledge and faith, in the ages to come.

That it is the Lord's own name here in view may perhaps be inferred from the further promise (under another figure) "I will write upon him Mine own new name" (3. 12, and see 14. 1). Nor can any name other than His be thought of as conferring special advantage and reward. That the holder alone knows the name implies peculiar personal privilege, a personal intimate knowledge of the Lord and benefit therefrom, to be enjoyed individually by each who receives this white stone. Even in this life the food each eats is peculiarly his own, and a stranger meddleth not with this joy, though each other has it for himself. Perhaps this future accession of knowledge of God is included in the Lord's words just quoted "and *will make it known*." And with this increased understanding of the Lord there will follow increased confidence in Him, and so of influential service, even as it is written, "And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee," and "I will set him *on high* because he hath known My name" (Ps 9. 10; 91. 14).

4. 2. 26-28. "*And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of My Father: and I will give him the morning star.*"

(i) *Authority.* The emphasis here is heavy upon continuing unto the end. A foreign statesman remarked that the English always win one battle—the last. This will not always be so. The last battle of this evil age will not be won by the British lion but by the heavenly Lamb (c. 19). That victory will secure His authority over all nations, to break down evil and to build up righteousness. This the Father has guaranteed to the Son (Ps 2 here quoted; etc.), and this sovereignty the Son will graciously share with those who share His wars unto the end of life or of the age, as the case of each may be. Verily it is a prize

worth winning, but it has to be *won*. Grace grants the opportunity, grace affords freely the strength and courage ; but grace must be employed, not neglected.

(ii) *The Morning Star*. Those who teach that the Lord will come for the church before the End Days regard that event as His coming as the morning star, in contrast to the later descent in glory, which they consider to be His coming as the sun of righteousness. Thus Wm. Kelly (*in loco*) : "The sun when it rises, summons man to his busy toil, but the morning star shines for those only who sleep not as do others—for those who watch as children of light and of the day," which just remark he then applies to the taking away of the church before Christ will appear in glory.

But it seems unwarranted thus to make the promise to read : "I will give him *to see* the morning star." In the parallel sentence it has been said to the same overcomer "to him will I give authority over the nations," which cannot be made to read "to *see* authority over the nations."

The true force of the figure is easily discerned from the prophetic passage which pictures Messiah as a star. In Nm 24. 17-19, we read :

*

I see Him, but not now ;
 I behold Him, but not nigh :
 There shall come forth a star out of Jacob,
 And a sceptre shall rise out of Israel,
 And shall smite through the corners of Moab,
 And break down all the sons of tumult.
 And Edom shall be a possession,
 Seir also shall be a possession, His enemies ;
 While Israel doeth valiantly.
 And out of Jacob shall one have dominion,
 And shall destroy the remnant from the city.

Here the coming of Messiah out of Jacob as a star is connected with His rising out of Israel as a rod, the two similes being but one picture, and as a rod He shall smite and break to pieces the enemies of Israel. The word rendered "sceptre" is so translated only nine times, but "rod" in thirty-four places, and very notably in Ps 2. 9 : "Thou shalt break the nations with a rod of iron." In this place in Numbers, where also smiting and breaking the nations is in question, "rod" seems the appropriate translation, and consistent with Is 11. 4, "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth."

These promises of and to Himself the Lord graciously passes on to His faithful followers, which promise therefore refers, as do

the OT passages, to Christ as the King of Israel rising to destroy His and their foes, the star being a figure of a heavenly ruler. Whilst Israel's night is still utterly dark, for the Beast seems just about to blot out Jerusalem, then Christ will rise as the morning star, the conquering ruler, and will destroy the foe. This work of judgment upon the Beast will be speedy (Zh 14. 12), but that upon the surrounding enemy nations will not be accomplished instantaneously, for in part Israel themselves will perform it in the course of subsequent battles (Is 11. 14 : Ek 39. 10 : Zh 2. 9 : Jr 30. 16 : Is 33. 23 : fulfilling Gn 49. 27, 1). And by reason of the awful scourge of war Palestine will be a desert (Jl 1), and there will be widespread desolations in the earth in general (Ps 46. 8), resulting from the judgments described in the *Revelation*. But the work of vengeance having been presently completed by Christ as the rod and the star, He will then become the sun of righteousness, by His beneficent activity causing fruitfulness and gladness to be again the portion of the godly (Ml 4. 2).

This order of events is seen clearly in Ml 4 ; for ver. 1 describes the burning up of the wicked and then the sun arises with healing in His wings. It is found also in Jl 2. 18-27, which details first the destruction of the armies of the Beast, and afterward the blessing of the land and people. So that the rising sun is not a picture of the actual event, but of what Messiah becomes to Israel after the destruction of their foes.

In the only two places in the NT where the figure "star" is used, it is introduced in the same connection and order. Our verse speaks *first* of the rod of judgment breaking the nations, and mention of the morning star *follows*. And thus Rv 22. 16 mentions *first* that He is the "root and offspring of David," that is, He is Israel's King, and then the figure of the morning star *follows*. Had the meaning been that mentioned first above, the order should be the reverse ; nor would there be expected any intimate connection between the shining of the star and the dashing to pieces of the nations, since the view in question separates these by many years, during which very many momentous events are to take place, and it also makes the Morning Star to apply to the church of God only.

I find that Trench (*Epistles to the Seven Churches*, 155) and B. W. Newton (*Prospects of the Ten Kingdoms*, ed. 1873, 350, note) took this view. The earliest Latin commentator on *Revelation*, Victorinus (cent. 3), explained the promise as meaning to rise in the first resurrection (see *Speaker's Comment. in loco*). This is included, for only such as then rise will share the authority of Christ as the star.

It is not without interest that the ancient Egyptians spoke of the dead man who has been glorified among the gods as the Morning Star. His resurrection was his " birth " as the morning star (*Book of the Dead*, CXXXIV, CXL, CXLI, CXLIII, 169, 170) and he prayed that he might "*come forth as the Morning Star*" (185). This accords with the remark above that the overcomer is not merely to see Christ as the morning star, but is to share that character and office. The morning star is given to him, as a character and office of his own. The words of our Lord from heaven show what will be the true fulfilment of those dim and misapplied expectations entertained, as He knew, by men of earlier times.

5. 3. 5. "*He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments ; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*"

(i) *White robes.* It is an ancient suggestion that the white robes mean the resurrection body of glory. If so, it will emphasize that the sharing the first resurrection is a reward for having lived a holy life on earth. But a man's body is an essential part of his being, whereas garments are an added covering put on that body, and so are not the body. This distinction is clear in the account of the transfiguration of our Lord, itself a sample of the conditions in the kingdom of glory : " the fashion of His countenance was altered [this was His body], and His raiment became white, dazzling " (Lk 9. 29). Heavenly beings, angels, also present themselves in " raiment as white as snow, dazzling " (Mt 28. 3 : Lk 24. 4 : Ac 1. 10). That the raiment is not the person is seen clearly in Rv 10. 1, for the strong angel is " arrayed with a *cloud*." Again, " fine linen, white, pure," is the clothing of the angel hosts who come forth with the Lamb to the final battle (19. 14), and also is the garment which the bride puts on herself for the marriage (19. 8). In this last case the distinction between the person and the robe is incontestable, for she puts it on herself, and that in which she clothes herself is her " righteous acts," and a man's acts are not his body. Moreover no man can array himself in the resurrection body ; that can come to pass only by a direct act of God, who alone raises the dead. Moreover, as " bride " is a figurative term for a company of persons, so " white linen " must be a figurative term ; but the resurrection body will be an actual reality.

Though the resurrection body of all raised in the first resurrection will be a heavenly body like in nature to that of Christ, yet, " one star differeth from another *in glory* " (I Cr 15. 41) ; and the present promise is of a special resemblance to and

association with the holy Lord, His gracious reward for the diligence that brought in this present life some distinct moral resemblance to His life of purity. By the grace of the holy Spirit it is possible to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world" (Js 1. 27), "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jd 23); possible even though, in the ordering of God, one may live in a Sardis, a wicked heathen city. This must have demanded special watchfulness, with diligence in "girding up of the loins of the mind" as they picked their way through this squalid world (I Pt 1. 13 : II Pt 1. 19), the figure here being that of a person tucking up his flowing robe into the waist-band while he picked his way toward the house of feasting. But some few in Sardis were zealous in this. They gave full heed to the word (Ec 9. 8), "Let thy garments be always white; and let not thy head lack oil" (the renewing of the Holy Spirit); and beyond others they shall be counted worthy of intimacy with Him who in this same defiled world was "holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners," and therefore has been "made higher than the heavens" (Hb 7. 26).

The stress of the promise is upon this close, constant association with the Lord: "they shall walk about with Me," shall be the King's "companions" (Hb 3. 14 *μέτοχοι*). Comp. II Sm 15. 37; 16. 16, 17 : I Kn 4. 5; 12. 8; the king's "friends"; and note the plain condition of this friendship laid down by the Lord in Jn 15. 14, 15, even unhesitating obedience.

(ii) *The Book of Life*. The first mention in Scripture of the book of life is in Ex 32. 32, 33, in the appeal of Moses: "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written"; with the answer of God: "Whoso hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book." This shows (1) that God has a record of the names of men. (2) That the name being therein assures the continuance of life, which is to be inferred from its title in our present passage, the "book of life." (3) That names may be erased. (4) That this is done individually, not collectively, even when the sin may be committed by many at once: "blot *me* out of Thy book," and the reply "*him* will I blot out." (5) That erasure is on account of sin, but such sin as is directed against God himself: "Whosoever hath sinned *against Me*." The history illuminates this. Though in a sense every sin is against God (Ps 51. 4), it was not what may be termed common offences which were in question that day, but the gross and deliberate sin, directed against God himself, of having made and worshipped a god in place of Jehovah. Hence the force of the exact expression

(Newberry) "whoso sinned"; not "hath sinned" at any time, but "sinned against Me" on this present occasion.

The almost abrupt way in which the words of Moses are given in the history suggests that the fact of this divinely written "book" was already well known to him and his readers. No explanation was felt necessary. This was indeed the case, for the subject was well known to Moses by his having been "instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Ac 7. 22). *The Book of the Dead* mentions such "books," the god Thoth being the scribe of the gods, and reference is made to beings "which would blot out" the names of the *khus*, the spirits of deceased men (c. CXLIX, xii). Budge remarks that "The preservation of the name was considered to be of the highest importance, for the blotting out of the man's name brought with it eternal death" (p. CLXIV). We may think of our Lord's words (Lk 10. 20) that it is a higher matter of congratulation that one's name is written in heaven than even to have authority over demons on earth. But while the blotting out of the name does under certain circumstances involve, as the Egyptians thought, eternal death (Rv 20. 15), it is not to be hastily assumed that it must do so in every case of erasure. It is at least possible that the first intention of the record has reference to the right to live on in this life, and the blotting out may only involve the premature cutting short of a life that but for gross evil would have been prolonged here. Perhaps we are too little informed as to the original ground and purpose of the name being inscribed to be able to dogmatize upon the matter of blotting it out. It is hard to believe that Moses was asking for *eternal* death.

Because very ancient literature contained such resemblances to the conceptions and expressions of Moses it has been assumed, hastily or perversely, that he borrowed from that source, and therefore was not divinely taught to teach. It seems rather to have been the case that he, being well versed in these current ideas, was employed by the true God to rescue out of the confused and misapplied systems of human thought things which were at basis true and to set them in their original and proper connections. The divine condemnation of the ancient world rests upon the fact that they knew God and refused to walk in that knowledge (Rm 1. 18, ff.). Examined in the light of Scripture, mythology justifies that condemnation, for it shows how very much truth must have been known at the first for so much to have been incorporated into corrupt religions. Conversely, by showing what ideas were in the minds of men of old, mythology gives precision and force to many statements of Scripture which are obscure to

the modern mind, though they would have been clear to the first readers.

Occasion will follow to refer again to this subject of the books (see p. 351). Here it is only further to be remarked that the Christian who has studied to walk in holiness, and has defeated the peril of defilement, runs no risk of his name being expunged from the book of life: "The one overcoming . . . on no account will I blot out his name" (*οὐ μὴ ἔξαλείψω*). Thus it is a parallel guarantee to 2. ii, and emphasizes the eternal security of the overcomer.

(iii) *The Confession of the Name.* In sharp and glorious contrast to the name having been erased from the book of life, and the person remaining in the place and state of the dead, the Lord here renews His promise that He will openly acknowledge the overcomer in a public heavenly assembly: "before my Father and before his angels." This is a repetition of the same gracious assurance that He had given twice when on earth (Mt 10. 32, 33: Lk 12. 8, 9). The former passage reads: "Every one therefore who shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in heaven"; and the latter passage says: "Every one who shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth Me in the presence of men shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God." The present promise combines these two by saying, as in Matthew, "before My Father," and as in Luke "before His angels." Both passages set the promise in connection with enduring persecution for Christ's sake, as part of the stimulus needed to be faithful and to endure. It is in such tests that the believer is most likely to compromise, to hide his light under a bushel, to become defiled as the world. If faith and courage fail, and he be defeated and defiled, and he so remain, then, when the time shall have come that he might have been arrayed in white and owned by his Lord as one worthy to be His companion, he will be denied that honour. If now, like Peter, one has denied his Lord, let him, like Peter, at once leave the company of the worldly, and weep bitterly; then may he, as did Peter, find forgiveness and restoration, become a valiant confessor of Christ in His rejection, and be, with Peter, a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed (I Pt 5. 1).

These promises and warnings of their Lord burned indelibly into the thinking of the first disciples. Thus Matthew, who heard them spoken, includes them in his narrative that they may gain wide currency. Luke, too, who, many years later than the

time of Christ, searched into the facts of His life and teaching (Lk 1. 3), learned of these statements, and that they had been given twice, and he gave them still wider currency among Christians. So deeply were they enshrined in the hearts of disciples that they were embodied in the terse epitome of prominent beliefs which Paul, as his life was closing, quotes and endorses as a trustworthy current saying (II Tm 2. 11-13) :

“ Faithful is the saying :

For if we died with Him,
we shall also live with Him :
If we endure,
we shall also reign with Him :
If we shall deny Him,
He also will deny us :
If we are faithless,
He abideth faithful ;
For He cannot deny Himself.”

The last sentence applies to both contingencies, His confession or His denial of us ; He must and will be faithful to Himself in either case. The inescapable alternative is denying Him and being denied by Him, or bravely confessing Him before men and being acknowledged by Him when His kingdom is about to be publicly inaugurated. That this will be the season is to be inferred from the context, that enduring faithfully will issue in sharing His company (“ living *with* Him.”) Comp. “ they shall walk about *with* Me ”), and in sharing His sovereignty (“ we shall also *reign* with Him ”). The same context is found in other special promises to overcomers : ruling the nations (2. 27) ; sitting on Christ’s throne (3. 21).

In the interests of strict accuracy it should, however, be noted that it is not said that the overcomer or the overcome will be present on the exact occasion when the name is owned or denied by the Lord. This should not be assumed, but be rather a point for more exact study of the Word. The plain parallelism, as in our Lord’s statements in the Gospels, almost suggests the contrary ; for it is in the absence of Christ that we confess or deny Him, and it is therefore at least possible that it will be without our presence that He will confess or deny us. All that is said is that it is the *name* that is to be owned by Christ on this occasion. In *Firstfruits and Harvest*, 75-82, I have discussed the likelihood that the decision by the Lord as to what believers are to share in the first resurrection, and so to reign in His kingdom, is reached by Him before that first resurrection. See also p. 80 above.

In the present passage it is the confession, rather than the

denial by Christ that is emphasized. This positive aspect also had its parallel in ancient thought as disclosed in the *Book of the Dead*, and would not be a strange idea to men of that time. For after the judgment of the deceased had been concluded in his favour, the recording god reported the result to the supreme god, Osiris, acknowledging that the person whose name he mentioned had been shown worthy of admission to the presence and fellowship of the gods (*Book of the Dead*, p. CIV).

6. 3. 12. "*He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name.*"

On many Egyptian pillars may be seen hieroglyphs surrounded by what is termed a *cartouche*, formed by two parallel lines joined at top and bottom by curved lines. The inscription within this enclosure commonly announces (1) the name of the god to whose honour the column was erected, (2) the name of the city of Thebes, the capital of Egypt, and (3) the name of the king. Thus the pillar, which before was but an unshapen mass in a quarry, obtained the honour of becoming a public memorial of the god, the city, and the king. There were usually other pillars in the courtyards and precincts, but a few were in the sanctuary itself, and thus gained a permanent and most honourable place in the inner shrine, where the deity itself dwelled.

Corresponding privileges in the heavenly world are to be the portion of the overcoming disciple. (1) Formerly but a spiritually unshapen sinner in the dark quarry of humanity, he will reach a special association with and be a public reminder of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ("My God"). See later on c. 22. 4. (2) He will be openly connected with the heavenly Jerusalem, "the city of My God," on which more will be said on c. 21. (3) He will be associated visibly with the holy and true One, Who has the key of, that is, exercises the authority of, David (ver. 7), the God-appointed Ruler of Israel and the world. See further on 14. 1. And (4) his position will be in the very sanctuary of God on high, not in any lower region of the universe, even in that holy palace in the upper heaven which is yet to be the temple, the centre of worship for the universe entire. (5) These privileges, once attained, shall never be relinquished: "he shall go out thence no more." Satan was originally in that most honourable place and office ("thou wast the anointed cherub that covereth" the divine glory); but becoming rebellious he

was cast forth thence (Ex 28. 14-16) : whereas these, having triumphed on earth over his assaults on their fidelity to the God he had defied, shall never fail in purity or devotion, nor ever forfeit those highest honours.

Well, indeed, does the Speaker add, “ He that hath an ear, let him hear.”

7. 3. 21. *“ He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne.”*

It has been before promised that the overcomer shall have authority over the nations and rule them (2. 26, 27). This honour is heightened by the present promise that the authority so conferred shall be *regal*. Joseph had all but royal rank ; but there was one who in the throne was greater than he (Gn 41. 40). Christ must transcend Pharaoh in grace as in glory, and He will share His throne with him who conquers in His cause.

(i) The Son will receive His throne from the Father : He does not grasp it for Himself. That were to be like Satan. He acts always in the power of the eternal fact He himself declared : “ the Father is greater than I ” (Jn 14. 28).

(ii) This throne is the Father’s recompense for His fidelity and suffering as “ the faithful and true witness ” on earth (ver. 14).

(iii) The throne where Christ now sits is not that which will be His own throne ; it is the Father’s throne. This pregnant fact will come up for fuller consideration on c. 4. See pp. 111, 112. It means that as yet the Father, not the Son, is ruling the universe.

(iv) The throne of the Son will, in the Millennium, be on earth : “ When the Son of man *shall come* [that is, shall return to this earth] in His glory . . . then shall He sit on the throne of *His* glory ” (Mt 25. 31) ; and *then* shall the overcomers sit on thrones and judge (Lk 22. 29, 30 : Rv 20. 4). As in all empires, there will be myriads of subjects, but not of sovereigns. It is the conquerors in the late campaign who will be the kings.

Dr. A. T. Pierson pointed out that these promises follow an historical order. The tree of life refers back to Eden ; the second death to the Fall ; the hidden manna to the manna in the desert ; the white stone to the engraved stones on the high priest’s shoulder and breastplate ; the rod of iron to Moses holding the rod of God for the defeat of Amalek (Ex 17. 8) ; the white raiment to the garments of the priests ; the pillar in the temple to those in the temple of Solomon ; and the sitting on the throne to Solomon’s reign in glory and peace.

It has been remarked above that the aspect in which the Son of Man is described to each church answers to the state of each. The promises to the overcomers similarly suit the state or peril of each church, as will be here outlined briefly.

Ephesus had toiled and endured, and as to the body of their labours, the external efforts, they had not grown weary. But the inner life had felt the strain ; in heart affection to Christ they had lapsed and fallen. The inner man needed renewing. He who repented, and found again this inward invigoration of love to Christ, and so overcame personally the general defeat, should be blessed correspondingly in the day of reward—he should find permanent strength and satisfaction in the fruit of the tree of life.

Smyrna must meet severe tribulation, and each would need to be faithful, even unto the death of the body ; but such need have no fear of the *second* death.

Pergamum was tempted to eat defiled food, but he who defeated this temptation should eat of the sacred food of heaven, Christ, now hidden from men. Each who held fast the profession of His name, when it meant death to do this, shall receive His right to use His new name in the kingdom.

Thyatira was dominated by a false seducing prophetess. He who resisted this usurping tyrant, and maintained the crown rights of Christ as Head of His Church, shall himself be a ruler in the day of Christ.

Sardis was defiled and dying. Each who kept himself undefiled now shall walk in pure white garments in the day of glory. He that triumphed over spiritual death shall never lose spiritual life : his name shall be retained in the book of life.

Philadelphia was opposed by a *synagogue* of Satan, but each who stood aloof should be given a permanent place in the *temple* of God. He who did not deny Christ's name on earth shall bear His new name for ever.

Laodicea was a poor lunatic, sitting in squalor, but boasting of fancied riches. He who, by humbling himself, overcame this pitiful pride, shall sit at table now with the Lord, and hereafter shall sit with Him in glory on His throne.

To see myself as I am is the first step to seeing Him as He is.

CHAPTER IV

THE VISION OF THE THRONES

Dn 7. 9-14, 26, 27 and Rv 4 and 5

That these two sublime scenes represent one and the same event is clear from their agreement in general and in detail. The later vision includes more details than the earlier, but both scenes are in heaven, in each there is a central Figure on a throne, and also other thrones associated with His. There are fiery flames in the one and flaming torches in the other. Angel hosts surround and attend upon the thrones, and the numbers of them are identical, thousands of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand. In both visions a Son of Man approaches the throne and is invested with universal authority. The issue is that government is transferred from the wicked to the righteous, under the supreme rule of that Son of Man, the Lamb. In the nature of things such an investiture, because its issues are everlasting, can never be repeated, nor can any successor supersede the Son of God and Son of Man, the Lamb.

Now at what point in the development of the divine program of the universe is this transcendent event to take place? The question is crucial to the whole interpretation of the *Revelation*, for all that follows after c. 5 is consequent upon this investiture of the Lamb.

Some consider that the whole scene belongs to the future, to the closing days of this age; but some think that the investiture took place at the ascension of Christ to the right hand of the Father. In consequence, these latter make an immediate application of the *Revelation* to the immediately following period and seek to trace a fulfilment of the visions throughout the long christian centuries, leading on to the advent of the Lord as in c. 19.

We attempt here to demonstrate that this view cannot be maintained, and that the great scene still awaits fulfilment. Four major considerations settle the question. 1. The time of the visions does not harmonize with this view. 2. The throne to which Christ ascended is not the throne of these visions. 3. The present position and service of Christ is not that disclosed in the

visions. 4. The details in Daniel are distinctly against the theory.

1. *The Time is not in Harmony.*

The vision of Rv 4 was given to John some sixty or more years after Christ had ascended, and he was distinctly informed that the things he was about to see lay still in the future, being "things which must come to pass hereafter" (4. 1). In all the remainder of the *Revelation* there are extremely few, if any, details which refer back prior to the time when John saw the visions. The only statement we have noticed is 17. 10, "the five are fallen," and this may be waiting fulfilment. Things which were then in the future cannot include the ascension which was already long past. This sets aside also the application of the Man-child of c. 12 to the ascension of Christ.

In 3. 21, the Lord had said that He had already sat down in the throne of the Father, which distinguishes that event from the scene which was to follow in the future. John had witnessed the ascension in his early manhood. How could he now, when an aged man, have possibly supposed that what he was so plainly told was still in the future was really referring to what he knew, and indeed had just been reminded by the Lord, had taken place so long before?

Of old it had been said to the Lord that He was to retain that position at the right hand of the Father until a time should come when the Father should set His enemies as the footstool of His feet (Ps 110. 1). The enemies of God and of His Christ are still at large and in power in both heaven and earth, so that the time for the Lord to leave that throne has not yet come. The very words "sit . . . until" imply an interval; but the theory we refute asserts that without any interval the Son commenced His rule. Yet Hb 10. 13 refers to this as still only an expectation: "He sat down on the right hand of God from *henceforth* expecting, etc." But what one seeth why doth he yet hope for it, expect it? Thus a generation after the ascension that subduing of His foes was not yet in fulfilment but was still future ("we see not yet all things subjected to Him," Hb 2. 8), and consequently Christ was still on the throne of the Father waiting.

But in Rv 4 and Dn 7 He is not on a throne, but is brought before a throne, and he is standing, and is in the midst of that throne, that is, is immediately in front of the actual seat which is the centre of the whole great throne. He is not shown at the right hand of Him who sits on the throne. For a helpful illustration of such a royal throne the wisdom of God has preserved

a sufficient description of the grand throne of Solomon, with its ascending steps, its figures of the king of beasts on either side, and the seat itself of which all the throne was the noble support (I Kn 10. 18-20 : II Ch 9. 17-19).

2. *The Thrones are not the same.*

Where is situate that throne of the Father on which the Lord sat down at His ascension? In Hb 1. 3 it is said to be "in the heights" (*ἐν ἡψησθαις*). To this is added (Hb 4. 14) that we have a great high priest who has "passed *through* the heavens" (*διέρχομαι*), which word in its proper force means to go right through and beyond a region, as in Mk 10. 25 : Lk 4. 30 ; 19. 1 : Mt 12. 43 : Ac 13. 14 ; 19. 1, 21. Therefore it is said (Hb 7. 26) that the Lord at that time "became *higher* than the heavens"; and thus Eph 4. 10 says that "He ascended *far above all* the heavens."

That "Majesty in the heights" is eternal. It was before the universe was made, either the earth, or the heavens prior to the earth. The universe is external to It and It is above the universe: "Behold, the heavens, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain Thee" (I Kn 8. 27). When the present heavens and earth shall pass away It shall abide, for It is external to them. When new heavens and earth succeed the present It will remain unchanged, for It is the glory of the Eternal. This does not lessen the fact that God in His omnipresence pervades the created universe and beyond it, but asserts that His throne, the seat and centre of His glory, is far above all the heavens. This subject will arise again on c. 20. II.

But the throne of Dn 7 and Rv 4 is not eternal. That which is eternal cannot be "placed" in position or be "set" on a given occasion, for it is already there and cannot be not there, for if it could be it would not be eternal. Hence of this administrative throne it is said that "Jehovah hath *prepared* His throne *in* the heavens (Ps 9. 7), which word "prepared" is not possible in reference to that which is eternal.

Moreover, this throne of these visions is *in* the heavenly regions, not "far above all the heavens." The Son of man comes up to it "with the clouds of heaven," the throne is "set in heaven," and the hosts of heaven surround it. It were confusion of thought to speak of a person approaching to and standing before a seat on which he is sitting.

The King of England has two thrones: one at Buckingham palace, his personal residence; the other in the House of Lords, for governmental purposes. It is thus with the Most High.

The Scripture speaks of the throne of the Father, and it shows us another throne also, where God sits as Judge on occasion, and which throne moves from place to place as required by business of state. Nearly 900 years B.C. the prophet Micaiah saw one session of that great judgment seat, with Jehovah upon His throne and the host of heaven standing upon either side (I Kn 22. 19, and comp. Mt 25. 31-33 for a counterpart yet to be on earth). That court sentenced king Ahab to death and devised the method of his execution. Over a century later Isaiah (c. 6) saw another session of that court, at which the nation as a whole was condemned to blindness and desolation. After a further century or more Ezekiel saw that throne on the awful occasion when the judgment foretold by Isaiah was about to be executed (c. 1).

Ps 82 tells that God on occasion takes His place amidst His angel rulers, hears their reports, and supervises their activities. See Pember's *Earth's Earliest Ages*, ed. 15, pp. 128 ff., 288, 310 ff. Still earlier in human history there had come "a day when the sons of God presented themselves before Jehovah, and Satan came also among them," and he said he had come from the earth. His presence of itself, and this his statement, show that the scene was in the heavens. "And *again* there came a day" similar to that (Job 1. 6 ; 2. 1). On these occasions the case of Job came up for discussion. The American Standard Version translates: "Now it came to pass on *the* day when the sons of God came," and "Again it came to pass on *the* day." This repetition of the article suggests that certain regular court days are held by that tribunal. Probably it was on such an occasion that the report was presented as to the intolerable wickedness of Sodom, with demand for permission that it be destroyed (Gn 18. 20, 21); which report Jehovah decided to investigate by a personal inspection of the city. Thus strict and personal is the divine superintendence of the judicial administration of the universe.

Long before Daniel saw the vision of c. 7 he had already had direct knowledge of that court, in addition to what the foregoing scriptures might have told him. For those "holy watchers" of the doings of men had sentenced the mighty Nebuchadnezzar to be driven mad for his insufferable pride, and, after a respite to allow of repentance, had carried the sentence into effect (Dn 4). The scene of c. 7 is in simple continuity with all these former occasions well known to men like Daniel.

Thus the throne of these visions we are considering is temporal and movable, and is in the angelic regions; it is therefore not that throne which is eternal and is far above all the heavens.

Finally, this court of angels will pass away. The scene before us will be its last session, for "not unto angels," but to Christ and the saints of the high places has God determined to make the world to come subject (Hb 2. 5 : I Cr 6. 2, 3). This is the obvious significance of those heavenly sovereigns casting their crowns before *the* throne, for should a vassal king place his crown at the feet of his overlord it would signify the renouncing of his crown unto the disposition of his sovereign. There is distinct and contemporary evidence that this is the significance of this symbolic act. In A.D. 63 Tiridates, king of Armenia, to avoid war with the Romans and to secure their support, agreed to renounce his crown to the emperor Nero, on the understanding that he should receive it back as the emperor's feudatory. The matter was arranged between Tiridates and Corbulo, the Roman governor of Syria. The description of the act of renunciation is so striking an earthly counterpart of the scene in Rv 4 that it shall be given in full from Arnold's *History of the Roman Empire*, pp. 566, 567 ; ed. 2 (1852).

We are indebted to Tacitus (*Annals*, xv. 29) for a minute account of the final ceremony to which this interview was preparatory. The Parthian cavalry, with the standards used by that nation, was drawn up in squadrons, on the one side ; on the other, the Roman legions were marshalled in order of battle, displaying their eagles and other military ensigns. The statues of the gods were so arranged as to form a circular temple ; in the middle of which a mound of turf was raised, whereon was placed a curule chair, supporting the image of Nero. This emblem of imperial majesty was approached by Tiridates with every token of veneration and respect ; and after offering up sacrifices, the prince solemnly took the diadem from his head, and laid it at the feet of the statue. A shout from the two armies sanctioned the peaceful nature of the ceremony ; and the whole ended with a magnificent entertainment.

Having thus divested himself of regal power and rank, it remained for Tiridates to undertake a journey to Rome, in order to receive from the hand of the emperor the crown of Armenia, together with all the rights and securities the Roman people and Senate could confer.

The correspondences between the heavenly and the earthly scenes are striking. The centre chair of dignity, with the statue of the emperor, symbolized his supreme authority, raised above all. The statues of the gods grouped around remind of the four and twenty angel rulers ranged around the central throne. The armies surrounding all, correspond to the hosts of angels forming the outer circle of the heavenly court, as do their cries of exultation in both cases. The feast at the close answers to the marriage supper of the Lamb, to which the drama of the *Revelation* leads

up. The meaning of placing the crown before the throne cannot be questioned.

The conception that the throne of God, where Christ as yet sits, is beyond the created universe may well explain the words in Hb 1. 6, that the Firstborn is to be "brought in again into the habitable world," the *kosmos*, the universe of created things. It is not here the earth only that is in view, for the angelic hosts also are in question: "let all the angels of God worship Him." Christ, as to His present location as man, is at present outside the habitable world, or He could not at that time be again brought into it.

But whereas this court of angels will cease to function, the throne of the Majesty in the heights is of necessity eternal. And that this angelic court, and the judicial arrangement of which it is the summit, did not pass away at or upon the ascension of Christ can be proved.

Before ever Satan can bring up to the earth the Beast who is to be destroyed, as shown in the vision of Dn 7, he himself must be cast out of the heavens entirely and be confined to the level of the earth (Rv 12 and 13). Until then he retains his position before that court of God, accuses the brethren before it, and is the executioner in chief of its penal decrees. These powers he had held from earliest days, as is seen in Job's case.

Now more than twenty-five years later than the ascension Paul judicially handed over a brother to Satan for discipline (I Cr 5. 5). Some five years later again, when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, Satan and his spirit hosts were still in the heavenly places, being still "the world-authorities of this age of darkness" (Eph 6. 10-17). A year or two later Paul speaks of having handed two others to Satan for discipline (I Tm 1. 20). Thirty or more years later again, that is sixty years or so after the ascension, John is shown the casting out of Satan as an event still in the future. From all of this it is clear that the superseding of the heavenly tribunal did not take place in connection with the ascension of Christ, and therefore that He was not then installed officially as ruler and judge.

The perpetual conflict of the church of God against those powers of darkness ever since suffices to show that the situation is still unchanged; Satan is still in the heavens, and all who resort thither on the business of the kingdom of God find his opposition at its fiercest there.

A comparison of Is 6. 1 with Jn 12. 41 shows that Jehovah who was seen by Isaiah was the Son of God, for "these things said Isaiah because he saw His [Christ's] glory, and he spake of Him." But who carried on the supreme administration of the universe after the Son had resigned that position in heaven and was a man on earth? He himself while here showed this by saying that in heaven certain angels "do always behold the face of my Father who is in the heavens" (Mt 18. 10). So that the Father was then visibly among the angelic hosts, and this was *in* the heavens, not far above them all.

At the ascension the Son of God received again as man that uncreated glory which He had had with the Father before the universe was (Jn 17. 5); on the occasion before us the Son of Man is to receive by formal investiture the sovereignty which is the Father's recompense for His faithfulness on earth, His obedience even unto death (Is 53. 12, "therefore"; Ph 2. 9, "wherefore"; Hb 2. 8, "because of"; Rv 5. 9, 12, "*for* Thou wast slain"). Thus again are the two occasions seen to be distinct and the glories distinct. Ph 2. 11, "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess," points to the fulfilment of Is 45. 23, "to Me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear." Now this is to be at the time when all the ends of the earth shall look unto God and be saved, and in Jehovah all the seed of Israel shall be justified and shall glory. The most casual glance at this world shows that this is still future, which in turn proves that Rv 5 is also future, for this universal homage is there being rendered.

It would appear that at this last assize God the Father will sit in that administrative throne, not Himself to judge, for "the Father judgeth no one, but has committed all judgment unto the Son" (Jn 5. 22, 23); but in order to invest the Son officially with the position and dignities of judge and ruler already granted to Him in title but then to be conferred in fact. For it is evident that the Ancient of days (Dn 7. 9) and the Son of Man who is brought near unto Him must be different persons, as must be the One sitting upon the throne of Rv 4. 2 and the Lamb who takes out of His hand the book. No one can be brought near to himself or be pictured as taking a book out of his own hand. The two Persons are always distinguished and the former is God the Father. See 5. 13; 6. 16; 7. 10; 11. 15; 19. 6, 7; 21. 22, 23; 22. 1, 3.

From all of these particulars and considerations is it not clear that the thrones in question are different?

3. *The Position and Service of the Son of Man.*

At His ascension the Lord sat down. His position is regularly so presented. Ps 110. 1 : Mk 16. 19 : Ac 2. 34 : Hb 1. 3, 13 : Rv 3. 21. Cl 3. 1, "Christ sitteth at the right hand of God," was written thirty years after the ascension. Its present participle shows sitting to be His habitual position ; and His own words (Mt 26. 64), "ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power," by being linked with the next clause "and coming with the clouds of heaven," extend that sitting until the close of this age, when only He will so come.

The expression does not, of course, imply absolute immobility of posture. In Ac 7. 56 the Lord is shown as standing at the time of the trial of Stephen, and in Rv 1 John sees Him as standing and walking in the midst of the churches. This means that in relation to the affairs of the church of God and of its individual members He is active ; and so He became present to Paul in the night after his severe handling in the temple, to comfort and encourage His tried servant. But the expression does mean that in other relations than to the church, and throughout this age of grace, the general attitude of the Son of God is quiet rather than active, waiting rather than working. This is indeed the very argument of Hb 10. 12, 13, that having accomplished the work of atonement, He *sat down*, henceforth waiting for His next period of active service, which is not to be until such time as His enemies are to be subdued.

The theory we are examining supposes the exact reverse of this, even that from the ascension and onward Christ has been actively and ceaselessly superintending the mighty drama of judgments following upon Rv 4 and 5. It thus eliminates any period of waiting. But in these chapters the Lamb is represented as standing, not sitting, and throughout the rest of the book the Father alone is represented as sitting, the Son never. See 5. 13 ; 6. 16 ; 7. 10, 15 ; 19. 4 ; 21. 5 ; the only exception being c. 20. 11, "a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it," which in view of Jn 5. 22 we take to be the Son, and which occasion does not affect the present point, for it lies beyond both this age and the next, in the eternal ages. This will be discussed upon that passage.

The present work in heaven of the Son of God is a chief theme of *Hebrews*, and is there limited to intercession for His own people. It is not extended beyond them, which accords with the typical intercessory prayer in Jn 17 : "Concerning *them* I make request : *not* concerning the world I make request, but concerning those whom Thou gavest Me" (ver. 9). It is in their

interests, as Advocate, that He resists their Accuser (I Jn 2. 1, 2 : Lk 22. 31, 32). And if, as in Rv 2 and 3, He is shown as on earth, it is as in the midst of the churches, administering their affairs, not those of the world. But in Rv 5 and onwards this aspect ceases to be presented ; priestly service in relation to the prayers of the saints is rendered by angels (5. 8 ; 8. 3, 5) ; the Lamb is seen standing, not sitting, and is occupied intensely with the affairs of the world, judging and ruling in both heaven and earth.

This contrast is of profound significance. As yet Christ is still the Dispenser of the *grace* of God, directly to His people, and through them to other individuals. But it is not His present work to execute the *wrath* of God upon the world. Indeed, the special period for that is not yet come, for, while the administration of justice from heaven does go on, it is as yet but partial, not general and final as in the *Revelation*, and it remains as yet in the hands of angels, under the superintendence of the Father, not of the Lord Jesus and His saints.

He exercises judgment, indeed, but within His own present circle, the church ; and this He does to the end that we, receiving our chastisement now, will not have to do so at the time that the world will receive theirs. For it is expressly stated that this is the era of judgment in the house of God, whereas that of the world is as yet deferred, that, through the longsuffering of God, men may have further space for repentance (I Cr 11. 32 ; comp. Ps 94. 13. Also I Cr 5. 5 : I Pt 4. 17, 18 : II Pt 3. 9, 15). This separation in time of the judgments of the church and the world, so plainly taught in these passages, is set aside by the view that the book of the *Revelation* has been in process of fulfilment from the ascension of Christ and forward.

At the former coming of the Son to the earth, the Father did not send Him to judge but to save (Jn 3. 17). In consequence, when asked to act as a civil judge, and to order the just division of an estate, He refused, as not having been appointed to that task, proper though it is (Lk 12. 13, 14). And when pressed to decide in a criminal case (Jn 8. 1-11) He so dealt with the prosecutors that they abandoned the proceedings and so He had no call to adjudicate, and could show mercy. This is still His attitude even until now, or the day of grace to the godless could not be prolonged ; and in this He gives a clear example as to the place and course of His followers in such matters. The administration of justice, and the ruling of world affairs, is not committed to them in this age. Their business also is to display to all in all circumstances the *grace* of God. It ought not to be

asked of them that they share in matters contrary to this their appointed office. Every king requires officers of justice and soldiers ; a kingdom cannot be administered without them. But he requires also officers of peace, ambassadors for arranging treaties of amity and trade, for making overtures of mercy to rebels, and so forth. Now when such officers are sent on such errands it is not required of them to act as criminal judges or as soldiers, it would indeed defeat their very purpose. This is the present duty of the disciples of Christ. But a time will come, through the impenitence and hardness of heart of men, and with the completion of the outgathering and training of the company that are to reign with the Lamb in His kingdom, when in justice judgment must at length prevail against mercy, and the world, then fully ripe for wrath, receive it.

It is at that epoch that these great visions we are considering will find fulfilment. And because the attitude of God and of His Son toward the world will have then reluctantly changed, that of the saints also will have changed correspondingly. On the cross Christ, true to His then commission and in infinite compassion, prayed for the forgiveness of the ignorant heathen men who had just driven in the cruel nails. Not for Israel or the world at large, but for these it was that He prayed. The sentence before and the sentence after the words "Father forgive them, they know not what they do" are limited to the men actually crucifying Him (Lk 23. 33, 34). In full sympathy with His Lord, Stephen similarly prayed for his murderer (Ac 7. 60). Thus did Paul pray for his fellow-Jews who persecuted him (Rm 10. 1), and he exhorted other Christians thus to treat their enemies (Rm 12. 18-21). It is still the only proper attitude of the heart that would abide in Christ ; and the very fact that His Spirit still moves His followers to fulfil His word "pray for them that despitefully use you" (Lk 6. 27, 28) is itself evidence that Christ himself is still in this attitude toward His enemies.

But when the Lamb, by breaking the seals and commencing to execute judgment on the world, has shown that His office of executor of wrath has been at last assumed, at once, in sympathy with Him, His people are heard crying for just and long-deferred vengeance to be dealt out to their persecutors (Rv 6. 9-11). This by no means indicates that these martyrs were not Christians : it shows that they are in harmony with the Lamb in His fresh attitude and office. When He is executing wrath they cannot longer cry for mercy, as in the days of their earth-life. This principle has other examples in Scripture. See I Sm 16. 1 : Jr 7. 16 ; 11. 14 : Ek 14. 14, 20 : I Jn 5. 16.

Thus now, while the Lord judges within His church but not in the world, His people are to judge offences within the church but are forbidden to do so on men of the world (I Cr 5. 12, 13). A time will come when the saints shall judge the world, but it will be when their Lord does so ; they will sit with Him on His throne and judge and rule the nations (Lk 22. 28-30 : I Cr 6. 2, 3 : Rv 2. 26 ; 3. 21). The two last places are decisive that it is at the end of the age that saints will rule, for it is when Christ sits in His throne that they will do so. This will not be till His advent, for it is only then that the Son of man will sit on the throne of His glory (Mt 25. 31).

If the theory here opposed were carried through into practice, the spirit and conduct of the people of Christ toward the world would be reversed radically, in entire opposition to the plain precepts of the New Testament ; for if the Lord is judging the world they ought to be doing so. In principle this is the very ground upon which the Popes of Rome claim to rule over all kings and peoples. They so claim as being the alleged vicars of Christ of earth ; and if He were in fact already the Dispenser of justice and carrying out the program of the *Revelation* that claim were in principle, and if applied to His people in general, and not to a clerical caste only, one to be allowed. But it is precisely this spirit and conduct that Paul reproached in his most sarcastic words : “ Already ye are filled, already ye are become rich, ye have reigned without us : yea, and I would that ye did reign, that we also might reign with you ” (I Cr 4. 8).

4. *The Terms of Daniel's Vision are against the theory.*

It is agreed that Dn 7 and Rv 4 refer to the same event. In order to show that the former was fulfilled at the ascension of our Lord it must be shown or implied that Dn 7. 9-14 and 26 was then fulfilled. This will demand that the fourth beast of that vision was in existence when the Lord ascended, for it is during its career that the investiture of the Son of man takes place.

It has been commonly assumed that the four beasts of this vision are identical with the four kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar's image (Dn 2). These latter were a forecast of Gentile world sovereignty from Nebuchadnezzar to the Stone that crushes the whole image, that is, of the whole of the Times of the Gentiles ; hence it is assumed that the four beasts cover the same extended period, in which case the fourth was present on earth at the time of the Lord's ascension, and the application to that event of the investiture of the Son of Man is then deemed possible.

But that Dn 2 and 7 are parallel is not so certain as is assumed. I have argued the exact contrary in my *Daniel*, c. 7.

1. These four beasts all arise out of the great sea, that is, the Mediterranean. In all of the eleven other passages where the term "great sea" is used it is a proper noun and means the Mediterranean. Nm 24. 7 : Jh 1. 4 : etc. The beasts *arise out of* the Sea, that is, are powers situated on its coasts at the time of fulfilment of this vision.

2. Also, they all arise in a time of raging tumult on that sea : "the four winds of heaven brake forth upon the great sea." Readers of Virgil will remember how Aeolus, the god who controlled the four winds, was represented as letting loose a tempest on this same Sea to destroy the ships of Aeneas. The student of Scripture will interpret Daniel's statement by Rv 7. 1, where four angels are seen controlling the four winds of heaven. The picture in Daniel points to spirit agents stirring up vast conflicts between countries directly connected with the Mediterranean, out of which tumult four powers would emerge from that area, the last of which shall be destroyed by the Son of man.

3. It seems impossible to find fulfilment of these features in the history of the four empires Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. As to the two former, in no sense did they *arise out of* the Mediterranean, but east of the Euphrates, 500 and 800 miles from the Mediterranean respectively. Babylon conquered Syria, Palestine and Egypt, but there was no general commotion in the Mediterranean area already in progress when it did this. Persia annexed the eastern Mediterranean countries, invaded Greece, and was defeated at the naval battle of Salamis, 480 B.C. But again there was no tempest in the area already raging and out of which Persia emerged. Nor was the Sea in wide commotion in the fourth century when Greece rose to power ; and as to Rome, the conflict with Carthage two centuries later, and the sea battle of Actium, 31 B.C., were mere puffs of wind as compared with the raging storm which Dn 7 pictures.

4. Moreover, though these four beasts rose successively, they all did so during the one tempestuous time indicated by the one storm. This by no means suggests such a lengthy period as the five to six centuries from the rise of Nebuchadnezzar to the attainment of supremacy by Rome at the battle of Actium, 31 B.C., nor in fact was the Mediterranean in ceaseless commotion during those centuries.

5. Further, that the first of these beasts did not represent Babylon is clear from the fact that the angel said (ver. 17) that the *four* beasts were all of the future : "four kings which shall

arise out of the earth," whereas the empire of Babylon was already present when this was said, and, indeed, was just about to end with the death of Belshazzar.

6. In yet another particular the interpretation in view fails. The fourth beast devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped down the residue of the three former beasts (ver. 7). That Rome so treated the Grecian power is true, but it did not break to pieces or absorb Mesopotamia or Persia ; first, because in its time those empires no longer existed ; and then because in fact Rome neither overran nor absorbed either of those areas, or aught of the vast eastern territories of the latter, which stretched as far as India (Es 1. 1). Rome never really controlled effectively land beyond the Euphrates. Nor have the various western powers which have continued the career of the legs of the image ever yet destroyed and mastered Persia and the regions between it and India. So that neither in the first christian centuries nor down to our time have the details of these four beasts found fulfilment.

7. From this it follows that, while the fourth empire of Dn 2 existed at the time of our Lord's ascension, the fourth beast of Dn 7 did not, nor ever has existed yet ; so that it, and the accompanying investiture of the Son of Man, are still in the future, and, by consequence, the fulfilment of Rv 4 and all that follows is still in the future.

8. There remains another detail, involving a seeming contradiction, which has greatly puzzled expositors, and which usually accepted theories have not satisfactorily explained. Though the fourth beast devoured the others, yet are they shown as continuing to exist as separate beasts, and even as being suffered to continue a short while beyond the complete destruction of the fourth beast that had devoured them (ver. 12). It is certain that neither Babylon, Persia, nor Greece existed as a separate empire subsequent to the Roman supremacy ; so that this detail also was not fact at the ascension of Christ and still awaits fulfilment, and fulfilment subsequent to the destruction of Anti-christ by Christ. Upon this whole subject see my *Daniel*, c. 7 mentioned.

9. Nor must it be omitted (*a*) that prior to the investiture of the Son of Man the fourth beast had developed into a ten-horned creature, a ten-kingdom confederacy ; (*b*) that among these an eleventh horn had arisen ; (*c*) that this king attacked and completely defeated three of his neighbours ; (*d*) that he went on to defy and to blaspheme the Most High. None of these details had been fulfilled at the time Christ ascended ; nor, indeed, as we think, has the utmost ingenuity and invention shown aught

corresponding to them in subsequent history. At no time has the world seen a ten-power confederacy, ten horns on one beast, connected with the Mediterranean Sea, nor any other of the associated details. The attempts to show that there have always been about ten states in the area of the old Roman world are abortive, for they have never been a combination, one beast. All these details await fulfilment ; but all of them (excepting (b) and (c) above), with others, will be found combined in the picture of the beast of Rv 13 and 17, which chapters again are part of those things which John was told were to arise after that time and therefore long after the ascension of our Lord.

Finally, the theory we are examining is at variance with the interpretation of the vision given to Daniel by the angel.

After explaining the meaning of the fourth beast and outlining his career, the angel said : " But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy it unto the end . . . and the kingdom shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High " (vs. 26, 27). That judgment session of the thrones therefore is not concerned, as the theory must of necessity assert, with the control of the long career of the fourth part of the image of Dn 2, but only with the *taking away* of the short kingdom of the fourth beast of c. 7. The beast truly is the final development and last ruler of the empire outlined by the legs and feet of the image, the ten horns corresponding to the ten toes. But it is with his *destruction* and the immediately consequent establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, that c. 7 is concerned, and by further consequence so is the book of *Revelation* from c. 4 to c. 20.

It is in marked agreement with this that c. 17 has to do with the *destruction* of the harlot, not with her long history through four millenniums since her commencement in ancient Babylon. Her history and character are mentioned just enough to identify her, but the vision has to do with " the *judgment* of the great harlot " (ver. 1), which will come at the end of the age just before the universal reign of the Beast (ver. 16, 17).

It is not necessary to our purpose to examine in detail any of the attempted applications of the rest of the *Revelation* to the christian centuries. They differ considerably among themselves, but they all break down upon the fact that these visions were not fulfilled at the ascension of the Lord but still await fulfilment.

Neither the historicist system of interpreting, nor the historic-futurist system, corresponds with the general picture or the vivid

details of these visions of the thrones. It was not needful to the growth and work of the saints of God that they should know more than the general outline of the development through the centuries of the mystery of lawlessness. But it was needful that the mighty crisis of the End Days should be fully unveiled, for reasons given in Preliminary Dissertation 3.

As to the work of Christ in the interval between His ascension and return, neither the Old Testament, nor Himself, nor the apostles enlarge greatly upon it. Its necessity and blessedness are shown very clearly, and most fully in the epistle to the Hebrews. But it is not given at all the same space in Scripture as compared with His final triumph in the End Days. It is but consistent with the whole Bible that its final section should present the same feature and be occupied chiefly with the same theme: it were inexplicable were it otherwise.

CHAPTER V

THE FOUR AND TWENTY ELDERS

(Rv 4. 4, 10 ; 5. 5, 6, 8, 11, 14 ; 7. 11, 13 ; 11. 16 ; 14. 3 ; 19. 4)

“Behold, a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne One sitting, and round about the throne four and twenty thrones : and upon the thrones four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments, and upon their heads golden crowns.”

(Rv 4. 2, 4)

I. August is the scene, momentous the occasion. The Ancient of Days (Dn 7. 9) sits in heaven to invest His eternal Son, as Son of Man, with absolute executive authority throughout the universe. And surrounding His glorious throne, themselves sitting on thrones and in glory second only to His own, and nearer in position than any other beings, save the four living creatures, are the twenty-four elders. Our enquiry is as to who these are.

There has been a very general acceptance of a theory that they symbolize the church of God (using the term widely to include saints of this and former dispensations), elevated to the glory of God as foretold in many scriptures. We venture to give reasons why this is impossible.

i. First of all, they are not symbolical at all, but individuals. Twice over one of the number speaks with John, an individual to an individual (c. 5. 5 ; 7. 13). Were they a symbolical company this would mean that a one-twenty-fourth part of the glorified church addressed itself to John !

This error is similar to that of taking (as some have done) the four living creatures also to represent the glorified church. Following which suggestion, and the rider on the white horse of the first Seal being taken without warrant to represent the Lord Jesus, the call of the living creatures to the rider to “Come” is given as an instance of the church calling for her Lord to return. Whereas it would only mean at the most that a fourth part of the church so called, and called upon Him to come to her after she, having been already glorified in heaven, is in His presence ! To show the confusion, it needs but to be pointed out that the living creatures giving glory to God is to be the signal for the

elders to fall down in worship. So that the church worshipping is to be the signal for the church to worship !

What is presented to the mind is one person conversing with another person ; and it were just as reasonable, and certainly consistent, to take John as symbolical of some company of people as so to view the one speaking to him. The Scripture picture is of one throne with one Person sitting thereupon, and twenty-four thrones around with one individual sitting upon each. It were equally reasonable to make the one throne and the one Person symbolic as to deal so with the others.

As one or another of these elders approached John and spoke with him, how could he have avoided receiving the impression that each was an actual individual, or how could any other conception have been created in his mind ? And that he did so regard them is clear from his addressing to one of them the direct title of honour, " My lord," and by his attributing to him personal knowledge, " My lord, thou knowest " (c. 7. 14). Why not symbolize the various individual angels that spoke with the seer, and one of whom he would have worshipped ?

2. A bride cannot be enthroned before her marriage ; but the marriage of the Lamb does not come into the visions until nearly the close of the series (c. 19). Not until after the destruction of the Harlot, Satan's false bride (c. 17), not until immediately preceding the coming forth of the Lord to the earth (c. 19. 11-21), not until the hour when it is to become fact that " the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth " (c. 19. 16), is it said that " the marriage of the Lamb is come." But if the elders represent the bride, the glorified church, this could not be, for the marriage must have taken place before the drama of events had even commenced.

3. A bride cannot be enthroned before her royal spouse has taken his throne. She may sit down with him, but certainly not before him. Yet the elders are seen on their thrones before the Lion of the tribe of Judah comes on the scene, and therefore before He is invested or enthroned.

4. The elders appear in the visions together with, and therefore distinct from, the following persons or companies :—

- (1) From *John*, for some of their number speak with him (5. 5 ; 7. 13).
- (2) The *Living Creatures* (4. 9, 10, etc.).
- (3) *Angels*, for these are grouped around the elders (5. 11 ; 7. 11).
- (4) The *saints*, for they present before the Lamb the prayers of these (5. 8). This term, be it never forgotten, was the

description commonly used in the apostolic days, and by the apostles, of the members of the church of God (Ac 9. 13 : Rm 12. 13 : 1 Cr 1. 2 : etc., etc. Still earlier it had been applied to OT believers (Ps 30. 4 ; etc.). It is therefore evident that the elders who present the prayers of the saints are not of their company, whether of the old or new dispensations. Also, on a later occasion they speak about "the saints" in a way that differentiates between these and themselves (see para. 8 below). With these facts in mind it is difficult to think that the saints to whom John was writing could have imagined the elders to represent themselves.

(5) The elders further clearly distinguish between themselves and "the redeemed," and therefore are not themselves redeemed men. Their song unto the Lamb is, "Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God by Thy blood *men* of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them unto our God a kingdom [or, kings] and priests, and they reign [or, shall reign] upon the earth." The word "us" which is found in the AV, and which makes the elders to include themselves in the company of the redeemed was questioned by Griesbach and is rejected from the text by Lachmann, Tischendorf, W. Mills, Düsterdieck, De Wette, Alford, Westcott and Hort, Nestle, Wordsworth, RV, Weymouth, William Kelly (*Lectures on the Revelation*) and J. N. Darby (*New Translation*). It is noteworthy that the two last-named scholars and theologians felt compelled to reject the word since both ardently advocate the view that the elders are symbolic of the church, and the retention of the word were no small support to that view, whereas its absence is distinctly against the same. This may be said of Dean Alford also. It is said that Alford, upon Dr. Tregelles assuring him that Codex Sinaiticus has the word, stated that he would re-insert it in his text. But this was not done, on account, we are told, of his death. The Codex Sinaiticus is principally relied upon for the retaining of the word, but concerning this manuscript Darby twice remarks that it "is very incorrect in the Apocalypse" (*New Translation*, Rv 5. 9 ; 19. 12 ; notes). By the omission of the "us," the passage is made harmonious with the other facts now being collated.

Tregelles would retain the "us," while yet agreeing to the rest of the elders' utterance being so altered ("madest them . . . they reign") as practically requires its omission to maintain the harmony of thought in what the elders say. To force them to say, "Thou didst redeem *us* . . . and madest *them* unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they reign, etc.," is to have two disconnected statements, one concerning themselves, which there

seems no reason for them to make, and the other concerning the "them" and "they," but who these are they do not say. The assertion that these terms refer to the saved nation of Israel is merely a conjecture.

(6) The elders are mentioned as separate from the company of the "firstfruits" (14. 1-5) who escape all the dread things that are shortly to come to pass on earth, and stand before the Lamb on the heavenly Mount Zion, according to His promise to the watchful and prayerful (Lk 21. 36).

(7) They are not of *those who come out of the great tribulation*, for an elder speaks with John concerning these, and, moreover, they are enthroned before the tribulation takes place (7. 13).

(8) They are not of the company that have part in the *first resurrection*, for they speak to God regarding these (11. 16-18), and in so doing they as much distinguish themselves from His *servants the prophets*, from the *saints*, and from *them that fear His Name* (i.e., of the earth), as they stand in contrast in the same verse from the *wicked that destroy the earth*.

(9) Finally, in c. 19 they are found in distinction from the *wife of the Lamb*, for they worship God (ver. 4) before even the announcement that the marriage of the Lamb is at hand.

From all of this it is evident that, even if we could not be positive who the elders are, we can be sure that they are not a picture of the church glorified. How much in relation to the interpretation of the *Revelation* follows from this the instructed will readily discern and the beginner will duly discover. This only need be suggested, namely that the church, completed and glorified, does not appear in the visions until referred to in c. 19 as the wife of the Lamb.

II. But this examination not only reveals that the elders are not the church, it also establishes that they are not human but heavenly beings. None others of mankind than the members of the "church of God" have any promise of being enthroned in glory in heaven; so that not being of that company the elders are not of mankind at all. This is indeed abundantly clear from the considerations stated under paragraphs 4 to 8 preceding.

i. It will be noted that we speak above of the church *completed and glorified*. Two companies at least from the earth reach the heavenly regions separately: the "firstfruits" (c. 14) some time before the Tribulation, and the "great multitude" (c. 7) at the close thereof. The vision therefore gives a picture of things actually existing in heaven down to the epoch when the Son of

Man assumes the sovereignty. And its lesson is that, associated with the Ancient of Days in the government of the universe, there are twenty-four chief rulers. There seems no reason to take the number other than literally. The senior executive officers of the Most High may as well be twenty-four in number, as more or less, if God has so ordered.

That they are rulers is evident from them being called "elders." "Let the elders that rule" (1 Tm 5. 7) shows the force of the term. Usually they might be seniors as to age, but not necessarily. In the east still the sheikh (Arabic for elder) who rules a village may be a far from old man, but he is the sheikh because the ruler. That they are rulers of royal and therefore highest rank is plain from their sitting on thrones and wearing crowns. That they are holy and faithful is evident from their white garments (for this typical sense cp. c. 3. 5); and that they have attained to these most honourable dignities by proving their worth is perhaps suggested by the crown that they wear being a *stephanos*, the word being that to describe the crown awarded to the victor in the race or conflict; though this thought we would not press unduly.

2. Their functions are therefore first of all *governmental*. Nor will this picture be at all strange to such as have attended to the multiplied hints of earlier scriptures concerning the heavenly government that overrules the earth. That sphere is a highly organized system of administration. There are angels, that is, principally, messengers; and over these is an arch or chief angel (Jd 9). These, or some of them, become on occasion soldiers, and go forth to war (Rv 12. 7). "Jehovah is a man of war" (Ex 15. 3); and as a great soldier, Nebuchadnezzar, learned, "He doeth as He will in the *army of heaven*" (Dn 4. 35). "Jehovah of hosts" is a frequently used title. Others are judges, appointed to secure the prosperity of the godly; though, alas, many of these have rebelled and are misusing their powers for the furtherance of evil (Ps 82).

In the heavenly places there are "world rulers," "authorities" (as the word "powers" properly means), and "principalities," which last term suggests that certain "princes" rule over certain territories. The English reader will recollect that Wales is accurately termed the Principality, because it is a special district of which the head is a prince. And upon this matter Scripture has something definite to say, informing us of the empires of Persia (Dn 10. 13, 20), Greece (5. 20), and Israel (10. 21; 12. 1), being each in their time, and Israel continuously, ruled over by a "prince." And we learn from Ek 28 that while there was a

human prince of Tyre (ver. 2), there was also a super-human "king" of Tyre (ver. 12) who was of cherubic nature, though fallen from his original glory.

We cannot here go more fully into this great and fascinating theme. Enough has been said to show how vast is this system of heavenly government, by means of which the Lord God administers His universe, and to enable us the more easily to see the place therein which the elders occupy. The terms angels, authorities, principalities, and " dominions " (the last a seemingly wider term that might cover more than one principality) suggest a graded order ascending in extent and power ; and these all culminate in " thrones," subordinate only to that " throne, high and lifted up," of which a vision was given to Isaiah (6. 1) and to Ezekiel (1. 26), and upon which sits " THE King, Jehovah of Hosts." He is a " great King above all *elohim* "—the heavenly rulers (Ps 95. 3), and at appointed times takes His seat upon His throne among His heavenly servants " judging righteously " (cp. Jb 1. 6-12 ; 2, 1-7 : I Kn 19 et seq. ; and Ps 82).

" Michael, one (or, according to the Variorum Bible, the first) of the *chief princes*" (Dn 10. 13). Does this term suggest the elders on their thrones ? If so, and if the Variorum reading be adopted, we know who is the senior of the company—Michael, the archangel. His name means, " Who like El ? ", so that thinking of him the thought at once passes upward direct to God Himself, as if Michael stood first beneath Him. It is harmonious with this thought that the chief heavenly power should preside over the affairs of the chief earthly people, Israel.

It appears that such an institution as a Privy (or private) Council, the highest circle with which the sovereign is pleased to consult, is a copy of things in the heavens, for at least twice God refers to His " secret council " (Jr 23. 18, 22). The RV correctly renders *council* not *counsel*. (Cp. also Jb 15. 8 marg, and in Ps 89. 5, 7, the possible distinction between the " assembly " and the " council " of the holy ones). Do not the elders correspond to such a council, since they are seen placed so near to God on a great state occasion when He is about to inaugurate a new development of His counsels ?

Nor must it by any means be overlooked that we have in Cl 1. 16 a statement that in the heavens, together with " dominions, principalities and authorities," there co-exist " thrones " ; and being mentioned before the others, and the other orders being named apparently from superior to inferior, the thrones must be the highest of all, as indeed the very term demands (cp. Gn 41. 40, " only in the throne will I be greater than thou "). Now of this

expression in Cl 1. 16, we should be without any explanation were the elders not presented to us in the *Revelation*; but the picture of them there given fills up this want, the book giving also large and vivid descriptions of the workings of the other subordinate "powers." Of this filling out in the *Revelation* of earlier expressions there are other parallels. Of the heavenly Jerusalem referred to in Gl 4. 26, little would be known had not a description been added in the *Apocalypse*. Similarly, we should be left to useless and misleading speculation as to what might be the "last trump" of 1 Cr 15. 52, did not the *Revelation* describe a series of "trumpet" judgments, and tell us plainly (c. 11. 18) that at the sounding of the last thereof the believing dead will have judgment given in their favour (cp. Dn 7. 22). This feature of a final chapter of a great work elucidating points mentioned earlier but left unexplained, is, of course, natural to literature.

Nor must we omit to note that when Daniel foresaw this great drama, commencing with the Ancient of Days taking His throne, he says that, "I beheld till thrones were placed," not merely one throne (c. 7. 9). Here again is a statement of which no full vision was then given, but which is amplified in Rv 4. And it may be worth observing that the supernatural being who is looked at as behind the king of Babylon addressed in Is. 14, and who is described as "the Day Star, son of the morning, fallen from heaven," and who having been a native of heaven would naturally express himself accurately on heavenly ideas, is no stranger to the thought of thrones in those exalted regions, for he cries, though vainly, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit upon the mount of congregation (or, the mountain of assembly) in the uttermost parts of the north"; and in what direction that mount is he further indicates by the words that follow, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds." And of him who is addressed in Ek 28 as having been the "anointed cherub" it is said, "thou wast upon the holy mountain of God," and "I have cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God." Here there is clear suggestion of some spot where the *elohim* assemble and where thrones are set, as other scriptures before noticed indicate. See Jb 1 and 2 and 1 Kn 22. 19 and Ps 89. 5-8. The student of mythology will not need to be reminded of Mount Olympus, and will see that pagan conceptions were sometimes the degenerate descendants of facts concerning the upper world which were, as Holy Scripture shows, well known in ancient days.

Thus the Word of God is not wanting in hints of subordinate sovereigns ruling under and on behalf of God, and this royal

priesthood comes into full view on the momentous occasion with which the "consummation of the age" opens. And since these cursory and incidental remarks of the prophets form, when pieced together, so consistent and illuminating a study of things invisible, it becomes unscientific and arbitrary to regard these ideas as merely "Jewish fancies." The *believer* sees them to be a revelation, and of matters which could not be known apart from revelation. None of the prophets labours to set forth a scheme of these things, as if inventing a philosophy of affairs supramundane; yet, taken together, their statements present a rich, animated, and consistent picture of that higher world, which fact is itself a cogent argument for the prophets having been divinely illuminated.

III. For a priesthood the elders are in some real sense, as is possibly suggested by the white garments. Compare Lv 16. 4, the linen garments worn by the high priest on the occasion when he entered the very presence of God; the holy of holies being a picture of that presence-place in the heavens where the elders are seen. Compare also Rv 3. 4-5, the promise of white garments to such believers as will be found worthy of the heavenly kingdom and priesthood.

Priestly also is the chief work in which they engage, namely worship. They adore the Lord God as the Creator (c. 4. 11), as the eternal Sovereign (c. 11. 17), and as the righteous Judge (c. 19. 4); but it is noteworthy that their adoration is not given as of the character of that in which an apostle pours forth worship, saying "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Of God in this relationship they do not speak. They worship the Lamb also as the Redeemer of men, and in so doing they, accompanied by the music of their harps, sing, which other heavenly beings are not stated to do. Angels are always spoken of as "speaking" or "saying."

A third priestly function is indicated in the statement that they "fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incenses, which are the prayers of the saints" (c. 5. 8). This their service must be compared with and contrasted with the similar, though not identical, function performed by the angel that has power over fire (c. 8. 3-5). The differences are that the elders present the prayers of the saints, whereas the angel adds incense thereto; and they so act at the hour when the Lamb is invested, whilst he performs his service some time further on in the progress of events.

A comparison may perhaps be helpful. On the occasion of the enthroning of a sovereign, officers of state may present to him sundry petitions from loyal subjects. These stand over from the day of the investiture, but in due time come up, very possibly with other and later petitions, for consideration ; whereupon some other official may show cause why the desires of the petitioners should be granted, which being acceded to by the sovereign, action duly follows. Thus the elders present the prayers of the saints, and later, at a suitable occasion, the judgment angel "incenses" them, that is, shows that the merits of the Lamb and of His sacrifice warrant, yea, demand, that for His sake the prayers of His people should be granted. In the first place the prayers are themselves styled "incenses," as being pleasant to God as coming from His people. In the other case, incense is *added* to the prayers, suggesting that it is somewhat from without, somewhat of heaven, that makes acceptable these prayers. In the first case, grammatically the words "which are" refer to the bowls rather than to the prayers immediately, which Alford prefers, understanding "bowls which are (represent) the prayers," and which bowls are full of incenses. Thus the prayers are to be regarded as acceptable because of the "incenses" which pervade them ; incenses typifying the varied merits of Christ and His sacrifice.

Such an office on the part of God's heavenly ministers may surprise those who pay but little attention to Scripture, and may shock some who have gone to the farthest extreme to protest against the evil practice of the invocation of angels. Could we but disabuse our mind of settled theories and pre-judgments, and could we but simply believe what is stated, we should then learn somewhat, and the facts and doings of the invisible world would stand revealed to the believing mind.

That the elders and the angel act as described in relation to the prayers of the saints is certainly what is stated, and it is for us to believe it. Nor is there the slightest doctrinal difficulty in accepting the statement, for it is not even remotely suggested that the saints pray *to* the angel or elders or that these pray *for* the saints. Moreover, their service is purely administrative. Certain functionaries fulfil their appointed duty of presenting petitions to the sovereign, and in due time another official proves that the prayers of the petitioner ought to be granted, which is done. Much that is obscure is lit up by the truth stated by the great poet in the simple sentence, "His state is *kingly*."

Be it further remembered that the children of a king go indeed direct to their *father* on personal and family matters ; but if

approaching the *sovereign* on affairs of state even they must conform to the regulations governing state occasions and matters. It is such an occasion that c. 4 pictures, and it is with such governmental matters of justice and judgment that c. 8 has to do.

Here again the earlier scriptures will help, by showing that God has ever employed angelic servants in administrative capacity. Consider, for example, these words from Gn 18. 20-21 : " And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is very great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me ; and if not, I will know." What is meant by the " cry " going up to God ? Plainly not the mere physical sounds of the city traversing space to the presence of God, else, to urge nothing more, some of the very blackest of crimes, those committed in darkness and silence, would go undetected ; but rather a *report* concerning the city being given, the accuracy of which the Lord determined to test by personal investigation ere countersigning, as it were, the demand for the terrible judgment deserved by the iniquities alleged in the report presented. Compare Gn 11. 5, " And the Lord came down to see the city, etc., " and consider also Ps 78. 65, " Then God heard "—heard what ? the actual sounds of the idolatry practised, or the report thereof ? Of course, God does not *need* to be informed, but He has chosen to administer the universe by associating others with Himself for the purpose.

But if it was a report that reached God, by whom was this given if not by those holy " *watchers* " of the affairs of earth whose scrutiny and ruling was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in a vision of the night ? (Dn 4. 13, 17, 23) or by such servants as are unveiled to our view in the first vision that was granted to Zechariah (c. 1. 7-17), and who brought back the report, " We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still and is at rest " ?

Now seeing that angelic servants thus mediate to report as to the *doings* of men, what difficulty exists to hinder belief in their also acting in reference to the *praying* of men ? for what is *praying* but the most important part of the *doing* of men ? It was an angel who informed a certain man that " thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God " (Ac 10. 4).

Moreover, even as the elders have kingly and priestly functions, so have they somewhat of a *prophetic* office also.

Their insight into the mind of God, and their knowledge of His purposes, is noteworthy. They perceive the prevailing energy of

His will in the whole realm of created things (c. 4. 11) ; they recognize that God's Lamb, crucified in weakness to be the Redeemer of sinners, is also His Lion to destroy His foes (c. 4. 9, 5). They have not only noted Christ's relationship to David, the king of Israel, and that He *is* (not was) of the tribe of Judah, and therefore is the rightful heir to the covenants with the fathers, but they penetrate deeper still, and know that He is also the Root out of Whose purpose and power the covenants originated of which Himself is the culmination and fulfilment. Further, they apprehend the principle, which so very many miss or deny, even that the Son of David holds the supreme authority in heaven and earth because He won it in conflict on earth ; and that His title to open the book of judgment and to deal with the enemies of God and man is that He alone proved able to vanquish these. They know, too, the purpose of God to constitute a new governing and mediating company from among the redeemed of mankind (c. 5. 9, 10) ; and they mark the tribulation and the triumph of saints persecuted by the Beast, and foresee the blessings and position of such victors (c. 7. 14-17).

Thus extensively acquainted with the mind and ways of God they are able to encourage and to instruct even John the beloved apostle, who had outlived his fellows and was therefore well taught in all the knowledge that had already come from God through them and himself.

Thus as kings and priests and prophets they sit and serve in the presence of the Lord God Almighty, and hitherto none save the four Living Creatures have been nearer than they to the throne of His glory. But now their fidelity shall be fully tested and proved. For, lo, in the inscrutable will of God, it comes to pass that one of a race lower in the scale of creation than themselves, a Man, is exalted far above all principalities, authorities and dominions, and is given the Name which is above every name, that in the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, as well as things elsewhere. And, lo, from out of the unfathomable depths of the divine wisdom there emerges this climax of the counsels of God, even that other members of that lower race, and such too as had deeply revolted (as these holy ones on high had never done), shall ascend with that erstwhile Man of Sorrows, having themselves first shared His earthly rejection and conflict, and shall rise to be nearer to the throne than the elders' thrones had been ; for whereas they sat each on a throne around the central throne, to these reconciled men from

the earth the King has promised that they shall sit down with Him on His own throne.

And now the time has come when this shall be, and when the integrity of the hosts on high shall be searchingly tested, for "when He shall have again brought in the First-begotten into the habitable earth He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him" (Hb 1. 6). And to these who hitherto have been of the highest of the high the test is necessarily the most severe. But they respond joyfully, to the glory of God ; and falling down before the Lamb they worship Him (c. 4. 8), even as they had before fallen on their faces and worshipped the Ancient of Days, thus honouring the Son even as they honour the Father, and thus honouring the Father by obeying His will that the Son should receive equal honour with Himself (Jn 5. 23).

Sublime is the spectacle, and gracious their example, in thus consenting to forego their pre-eminence as kings and priests and prophets that Another, and others with Him, His Bride, should take that pre-eminence. Grand, indeed, they appear when first presented to view sitting upon thrones and wearing golden crowns ; but more glorious still they are when fallen upon their faces before God, with those crowns cast at His feet, thus resigning their royal dignity unto His sovereign disposal (c. 4. 10-11).

Mighty is the grace that exalted them, and that maintained them in fidelity, whilst others of their fellows fell through pride (Ek 28, etc.). But yet more marvellous is the grace that designed to exalt sinners of the earth to yet higher glory, in order that heavenly intelligences may learn through God's dealings with the church how manifold is His wisdom, and how irresistible His power to fulfil His eternal purposes (Eph 3. 10, 11). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out ! . . . For of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. AMEN." (Rm 11. 33, 36).

Note on the Living Creatures.

i. The Cherubim are mentioned in Gn 3. 24 : Ex 25. 18, and often in OT, especially Ek 1 and 10 : in Hb 9. 5 : Rv 4 ; 5 ; 6 ; 7. 11 ; 14. 3 ; 15. 7 ; 19. 4. Possibly the Seraphim of Is 6 are the same beings. Satan was originally a cherub (Ek 28. 14).

ii. The AV "beasts" is thoroughly misleading. The word *ζῷον*, means *living one*, and is quite different from *θηρίον*, wild beast, as in Mk 1. 13 ; etc. ; and Rv 6. 8 ; 11. 7 ; and 36 other places.

iii. The Cherubim are not symbolic of the church of God, for in

Ezekiel's day they were already in existence as actual attendants upon the God of Israel. They are heavenly beings, yet not simply angels, for in Rv 7. 11 they are seen surrounded by "all the angels." Nor are they identical with the 24 elders, for they are nearer to the throne than these, being "in the midst of the throne" (4. 6), and are regularly distinguished from them.

iv. The differences in the descriptions show that these are symbolic, not pictures of the actual forms : e.g., no being can have at once four faces (Ek) and one face (Rv). Hence the use of these forms in the Tabernacle and Temple was not a contravention of the command (Ex 20. 4), "Thou shalt not make unto thee any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above," for no beings like these descriptions exist. This annuls the Roman Catholic argument in favour of images because of the figures in the Tabernacle.

v. The descriptions suggest that the Cherubim act under and for the Almighty as heavenly representatives of the earth ; its four chief orders being specified, man, lion, ox, eagle, i.e., mankind, the beasts of the field, domestic animals, and birds.

vi. They are shown acting in connection with God's governmental and judicial proceedings relating to the earth.

vii. They are associated (1) with the flaming sword which kept sinners from the tree of life : but also (2) with the rainbow (Rv 4. 3), the sign in heaven of God's covenant of mercy "with every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth" (Gn 9. 16) : and (3) with the blood-sprinkled mercy seat (Ex 25. 17, ff.), which shows the ground of that covenant of grace and assures its fulfilment.

viii. In a coming day they will lead the worship of the universe (4. 8-11, 14), being apparently its senior officers.

See *The Companion Bible*, I. App. 41 ; and *Earth's Earliest Ages*, 168 ff. ; ed. 15, 109 ff.

CHAPTER VI

THE SEVEN SEALS

(c. 6. 1—8. 1)

The primary explanation of the seven seals must be sought in the seventh chapter of the prophecy of Daniel. For the opening of the seven-sealed roll is consequent upon the Father delivering to the Son the actual government of the earth, of which the handing of the roll to the Son is the emblem, and of this whole scene *Daniel* 7 gives the first vision and indicates the occasion and the period.

Daniel saw in vision four wild beasts successively holding world dominion. The fourth was "diverse from all the beasts" that had preceded it, was "exceeding terrible," and devoured, trod down, and brake in pieces the whole earth. It had ten horns, signifying ten kingdoms, amongst which there grew up a "little horn," which though at first insignificant, shortly conquered three of the ten kingdoms, and presently was so daring as to presume to blaspheme the Most High and so powerful as to wear out His saints.

This blaspheming persecutor was suffered to continue for a space his oppressive supremacy; but the prophet "beheld till thrones were placed" in position for judicial proceedings, and "One that was ancient of days did sit," surrounded by "thousands of thousands," yea, "ten thousand times ten thousand" angel ministers waiting to execute His awful sentences, and with a fiery stream of consuming wrath issuing from a throne of flames of fire.

The AV "till thrones were cast down" greatly misleads. It is no question at this moment of the overthrowing of earthly kingdoms, but of judicial thrones being set in the heavens that a great assize may be held for the settlement of the affairs of the earth. This is a signal instance of how the AV fails us in crucial prophetic passages.

As the seer watched he seems to have wondered (note the "behold" of ver. 13) as he saw in that heavenly world One "like unto a son of man" coming right up to that august Majesty on the throne, and that upon him was conferred universal and eternal dominion.

These particulars are strictly parallel to those in Rv 4 and 5. There also are seen thrones, a centre throne encircled by twenty-four subordinate thrones.

It is arbitrary to render *thronos* by "seats" in 2. 13; 4. 4; 11. 16; 13. 2 and 16. 10, as in AV. In all of the other forty-one places in this book it means thrones, and is so rendered. Indeed, in 4. 4 it comes thrice, and the AV gives "throne" as the first rendering, as it should have done in the other two instances. These five instances of the word in the *Revelation* are the enlargement of Paul's statement that among the heavenly authorities there are some of royal rank, who have "thrones" (Cl 1. 16).

Upon the principal throne sits the eternal Father, attended by "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" of angels. Before Him is brought "the Lamb," who is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," "the Root of David," the Son of Man, and to Him as worthy is given full executive authority as Judge, the fulfilment of His own statement on earth that "the Father gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man"¹ (Jn 5. 27).

Evidently the two scenes are the same. The throne, the thrones, and the numbers of the attendant hosts are alike, nor is it possible that two such occasions should separately arise, since only once can the Son of Man be thus formally installed. This delegated authority, which is His by birthright as the Son of God and by acquirement as the Son of Man, when it shall have been once publicly conferred, will never be recalled, and so there never can be a second investiture. His kingdom having commenced is for ever.

The occasion of the scene in *Daniel* is therefore that of the vision in *Revelation*, and the interpreting angel distinctly indicated to Daniel what that occasion will be. He declared that "the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion [that is, of the Little Horn, the last head of the last world empire], to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him. Here is the end of the matter" (Dn 7. 26-28).

It is thus made clear that the main burden of Daniel's vision and the whole of that of John, as corresponding therewith, has

¹ So RV margin and ASV; Darby, Young, Rotherham, Godet render "Son of Man"; Westcott allows both. The Greek throws the emphasis on the title: "because son of man he is." There is no article: *ὅτι οὗτος ἀνθρώπος εστιν*.

to do with the career of the last Emperor of the last world empire, including his rise, his persecution of the "saints of the Most High," his overthrow and the complete destruction of his kingdom; with the bestowal of the "kingdom . . . *under* the whole heaven," that is, the universal sovereignty *on the earth*, upon the "people of the saints of the Most High," that is, Israel, and with the permanent establishing of Messiah's rule.

This, then, is the burden of the sealed roll; and the visions which follow the opening of its seals will therefore represent seven great stages in the period in question, leading to the consummation announced, even to the answer to the divinely given petition, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth" (Mt 6. 10). "Here is the end of the matter."

It is important to observe that the visions cover a period as much longer than "the time and times and half a time," mentioned in Dn 7, as may be required for the little horn to reach supremacy. The space described by that expression is only that during which he is permitted unhindered action against the saints (Dn 7. 25); his whole career must necessarily be very much longer, and it is all surveyed in the visions. It includes the former portion of the seven years of which the "time and times and half a time" is the latter half (Dn 9. 27), and the yet earlier and probably still longer period occupied by his rise, his overthrowing three kingdoms, and his forcing his way to supremacy, first over the ten kingdoms and then over the whole world.

If, therefore, as some hold, the "time and times and half a time" means 1260 years, then an earlier equal stretch of time must be assumed for the former half of the week, and a yet earlier and probably longer period also must be provided. Thus if our own day is near the end of the whole drama of the end times, as these suggest by placing us at the end of the Bowls of wrath of Rv 16, then the commencement must go back, not only 1260 years, not only double that distance of time, as they hold, but possibly as much again. This would mean that the commencement of Daniel's vision, even if there be taken only that part which refers to the Little Horn, must go back very far prior to Daniel himself! And inasmuch as at the close of the first Christian century the Lamb had not yet been installed, for John was shown this as an event future to his day (4. 1), therefore Daniel's vision also of that installing must have been future to John's day, and any scheme of interpretation which places that event, and the consequent opening of the Seals, prior to the end

of the first christian century, when John saw the vision, must needs be erroneous.

That the whole drama belongs to the final session of the court of God to put an end to the reign of the Beast further excludes the attempt to make the four horsemen of the Seals figures of spiritual forces operating throughout the whole christian era. In this scheme (as set forth by a well-known writer) the first rider is a symbol of the gospel going forth to universal triumph on earth, an issue of the gospel nowhere contemplated in Scripture. The second rider prefigures the dissensions caused by the gospel in families and nations. The third represents the international economic-commercial system created (as is asserted) and controlled by unbelieving Israel since their dispersion. The fourth riders, called Death and Hades, suggest the hurtful effects of heresies operating against the truth. Ingeniously argued, the scheme is none the less fanciful, and in any case contrary to the divinely revealed application of the passages to the taking away of the kingdom from the Beast at the time of the end so that it may be conferred upon the Son of Man and the saints.

That down to this hour the roll had remained upon the open hand of God the Father, waiting for any one competent to take it out of that hand, shows that the providential rule of earth down to this crisis had been conducted by the Father, *not by Christ*. This is of first importance for the understanding of the ways of heaven and for indicating the line of conduct, in relation to the governmental affairs of earth, proper to the followers of Christ during this present period. Until the Lamb reigns and acts in judgment His followers should not do so. So long as their Lord dispenses to the world the *grace* of God, so long should they walk in *grace* toward all men. When He commences to execute judgment will be the first occasion when saints should do so. As long as He remains outside the affairs corporate of mankind so long should His followers be outside of the same.

Down to this epoch of the reversal of all governmental arrangements of heaven and earth the *Father* administers the universe, acting through angels, good and bad, and on earth through men also. The twenty-four elders are the senior angelic rulers. But to Christ and His heavenly co-heirs this government is not yet committed because as yet God defers the final judgments in order that men, by His longsuffering, may have opportunity of salvation from the coming wrath ; and also that there may be trained, by long and severe discipline, the company from earth that shall be both accounted worthy and be found competent to govern with

Christ. To Christ and His people is committed the present blessed task of dispensing this grace of salvation and of training ; but when this necessary part of the divine plan shall have been perfected, and also the world by sin shall have become fit only for judgment, then to the Son and His companions (Hb 1. 9 ; 3. 14) will be entrusted the work of judging and ruling. To Christians now the word concerning all matters external to the affairs of the church of God is : " Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come " (1 Cr 4. 5, and note the reproof in ver. 8). " Not unto angels did God [in His plans] subject the inhabited earth to come " (Hb 2. 5), but unto Christ and the saints of the heavenly calling ; but in this present period the earth is subject to angel rulers. It is true that God uses in administrative work, both of peace and war, believing men who do not see the full implications of association with Christ as not at present ruling ; but it is not part of the high calling of the disciple to association with the rejected Lord.

That no one but the Son was possessed of title or ability to take the roll suggests the stupendous nature of the events that must follow the opening of it.

That the Son of Man is accounted worthy of this high honour because He had conquered, declares that a mighty conflict had been waged and won before the wind-up of this wicked age could come, or the establishing of that coming age of purity and peace. The Prince of this world is now to be cast out of authority over the earth, and only his personal Conqueror can effect this deprivation of the mighty angel, the most powerful of all created beings.

That the roll was closely sealed indicates that, though its general character may have been known, the details of its contents have been kept secret, and most especially the sequence of them. That no one felt equal even attentively to consider the roll reveals the solemnity and awfulness of what things were expected to occur upon it being opened.

And now in the vision the Lamb has taken the roll : Christ has assumed supreme executive authority. The elders, those angelic princes who hitherto had ruled under and for the Almighty, now resign their sovereignty, removing their crowns from their heads and placing them down before the throne, that is, putting them again at the sole disposal of the King Eternal who had conferred them. The whole heavenly host joyously and dutifully acclaim the Lamb worthy of this glory, because He had been

slain and by that death had laid a secure foundation for the triumph of God and holiness. Their thunderous applause dies away into a mighty hush, and amidst the solemn stillness the Lamb prepares to break those portentous seals. All heaven is alert ; whereas the guilty world beneath disports itself as in a comedy or groans under its tragedies, but is fatally unconscious that in heaven there has been pronounced the irrevocable sentence "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting." Now shall commence the "last days" of "man's day," now shall hasten the "consummation of the age" and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, peace, and joy.

In studying the several series of visions in the *Revelation* it is of great assistance to discover first at what point in any series the reign of the Beast and his persecution of the saints are introduced, for this is a known fixed point to which and from which to work in locating the various scenes.

SEAL 5

In the case of the seals this is not difficult, for in respect of Seal 5 we read that certain martyrs were told "that they should rest yet for a little time, until should be fulfilled both their fellow-servants and their brethren, those about to be killed even as they were" (6. 9-11). This indicates that in but a little time from the point in view persecution would be brought to an end and the time have arrived for avenging the blood of the saints and rewarding them. So that at the period of Seal 5 the final, the great, tribulation is nearing its close.

This vision is one of the most illuminating statements of Scripture upon the place and state of the godly dead. We cannot now enlarge, but may point out (1) that these martyrs were yet disembodied : they are seen as "souls," and they are seen "under the altar," the place where they had been sacrificed, the earth. Compare Ps 63. 9 : Is 44. 23 : Eph 4. 9. Hence (2) their resurrection is yet future. (3) They cry to their Master, and His answer is communicated to them ; so that the departed are not necessarily unconscious, as some assert. (4) For these the judgment seat of Christ is already passed, because the sign of His approval of them, as worthy to be His companions, is given to each of them, namely the white robe. Comp. on c. 3. 4, 5 ; 19. 8.

See my *Firstfruits and Harvest* (pp. 58-65) for fuller treatment. I have there said (p. 65) :

Now these souls that John saw are "under the altar." Not one of the first six seals, of which this is the fifth, pictures events in the presence of God in heaven ; all deal with the affairs of earth, or as seen from the earth. This altar, then, is not in heaven . . .

The picture is really quite simple. The brazen altar of sacrifice in the Tabernacle was square and hollow, with a grating upon which rested the wood and the victims. When the fire had done its work the remains of the sacrifice fell through the grating to beneath the altar, whence they could be removed on occasion. Now the place, "the altar," where these martyrs of Christ sacrificed person and life in His cause is obviously this earth, and thus the vision simply declares what we have seen from other scriptures, that the place of the dead is under the earth : "He descended into the lower parts of the earth": whence those still there will be removed at resurrection.

Since these pages were written I have learned that this was the view of the earliest known Latin commentator on the *Revelation*, Victorinus of Pettau (died 303). Mr. F. F. Bruce summarized this in *The Evangelical Quarterly* (Oct., 1938) as follows : "The altar (6. 9) is the earth : the brazen altar of burnt offering and the golden altar of incense in the Tabernacle correspond to earth and heaven respectively. The *souls under the altar*, therefore, are in Hades, in that department of it which is 'remote from pains and fires, the rest of the saints.'"

This confirms Bishop Pearson cited above as to the view held in the earliest christian centuries, that "very few (if any)" believed that Christ removed the godly dead from Hades at His ascension. *On The Creed* (Art 5).

SEAL 6

It agrees with this that Seal 6 describes the very series of disturbances in nature which the Lord declared to John and others should follow "immediately after the tribulation of those days" (Mt 24. 29, 30). The correspondence is too exact to be avoided.

The Lord said that :—

The sun shall be darkened ;
The moon shall not give her light ;
The stars shall fall from heaven ;
The powers of the heavens shall be shaken ;

Under Seal 6 :—

The sun became black ;
The whole moon became as blood ;
The stars of the heaven fell ;
The heaven was removed as a scroll that is rolled up ;

The Lord further mentioned :— Seal 6 intimates :—

An alarming roaring of the sea and billows (Lk 21. 25).

An earthquake so violent and extensive that every mountain and island was moved out of its place, which mighty upheaval of the land would cause just such prodigious commotion and roaring of the sea.

Christ described men as then fainting for fear and for expectation of those things which shall at that time be occurring on the earth ("things which are coming"; it is the present participle; things which are even then happening. Lk 21. 26). Under Seal 6 the earth-dwellers, terror-struck by what they are suddenly made to see in heaven, flee to the dens and caves, crying to the rocks to fall and hide them from God and the Lamb.

The Lord added that "then shall appear the sign of the Son of man [which is the Son of Man; as we say, the sign of the—which is the—Golden Eagle] in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn" ¹ (Mt 24. 30: Mk 13. 27: Lk 21. 27). And a comparison of Seal 6 with Is. 2 will show that this is just what the godless do see, for the prophet declares three times that it will be "from before the terror of Jehovah, and from the glory of His majesty," that men will flee to the rocks and caverns, and this at that time when the Lord "ariseth to shake mightily the earth" (Is 2. 10, 19, 21). It is therefore clear that this, and not any earlier hour, is the moment when the Lord "ariseth" from His seat, so causing the mighty convulsions foretold by Himself and the prophets and described under Seal 6. Then will be fulfilled exactly what Christ told His judges, even that they "shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power." Thus the Lord will retain His present position in heaven until this point of time. As those persons to whom He so spake are dead, it would seem that this stupendous scene must be made visible to the world of the dead, even as to this world of the living.

From the prophet Joel we learn that these awesome disturbances of nature will precede the "great and terrible day of Jehovah" (2. 30-32), for God declares that He will "show wonders in the

¹ The order of the clauses is not to be insisted upon as requiring *three* events, so making "the sign of the Son of Man" different to and preceding His "coming." For in Rv 1. 7 the "mourning," which here follows the "sign," results from the seeing the Son of Man himself, thus identifying the two. In Mt 24. 10 preceding, *καὶ τότε* does not indicate succession of events (as often), but means "during."

heavens and in the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the *great and terrible day of Jehovah come*. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered ; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as Jehovah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Jehovah doth call."

The chastisements inflicted by God by the hand of man will have served their purpose. The saints of the heavenly calling will have been ripened for rapture ; the godly of Israel will have been reduced to a very small remnant, purged and helpless, and crying at last to Jehovah as their sole resource (Is 1. 9 : Jl 2. 15-18) ; and now the Lord will personally pour out His wrath upon His sin-hardened foes of the nations and upon the apostates of Israel. But ere this is done, and the besom of destruction sweeps the earth clear of the impious, the safety must be secured of the godly of both Israel and the church. And therefore after Seal 6, and before the judgments covered by Seal 7, two events are introduced : (1) the sealing of the remnant from the twelve tribes of Israel, and (2) the removal to heaven of a great multitude that had come out of the great tribulation (c. 7).

The former of these events will be the fulfilment of Isaiah's call, " Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee : hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, Jehovah cometh forth out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity : the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain " (Is 26. 20, 21). This further makes evident that the coming forth of the Lord " out of His place " occurs at this time, the close of Seal 6, and not some years before ; for " His place " is not the clouds around this earth, but the upper heavens, and it is only at this point of time that He comes forth thence.

Of this preservation Zephaniah also speaks. In connection with " the day of Jehovah " (1. 7 ; etc.), even " the day of Jehovah's anger " (2. 2), the prophet cries : " Seek ye Jehovah, all ye meek of the earth, who have wrought His judgment : seek righteousness, seek meekness : it may be ye shall be hid in the day of Jehovah's anger " (2. 3), the time when " all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of [His] jealousy " (3. 8).

And it is of this time, and this godly remnant of Israel, that Jehovah says in Ml 3. 17 : " they shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts, in the day that I do make, even a peculiar treasure ; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

The conception of a mark to be set upon those to be thus spared is adopted from the parallel circumstance mentioned in Ek 9. In connection with the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the prophet saw an angel set a mark upon each that sighed and cried for the abominations that were bringing the judgments then in progress. He saw also angel executioners slaughtering all save such as were thus marked for escape. Thus will it be at the close of this age ; and it is no small comfort to be assured that though brutal Chaldean ruffians might revel in what to them was an indiscriminate sack and slaughter, in the fact every sword, spear, and arrow was directed or averted by angel skill and power. Thus Jeremiah, Baruch, Ebedmelech, and others were delivered ; and so shall be the remnant of Israel at the end.

It is important to observe that this deliverance will be on the ground of moral state produced in the pious. It will indeed be an act of grace, since only the inward working of the Spirit of grace causes affliction to sanctify, and even so, the sanctification being at its best imperfect is not an absolute ground of benefit. But in the scriptures quoted from the prophets the moral condition of those preserved is emphasized. They were the prayerful : "they poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them" ; they were the meek, who wrought God's judgment and sought righteousness ; they feared the Lord, thought upon His character, and encouraged others like-minded. Grace produces in its objects the moral state which righteousness can own. But there is always the possibility of falling short of that grace, and thus receiving it in vain (Hb 12. 15 : 2 Cr 6. 1).

Note on the omission of Dan from the list of tribes.

The Word of God gives nineteen lists of the tribes of Israel.

1. Gn 29, the order of birth.
2. Gn 49, the blessing of Jacob.
3. Ex 1, on going to Egypt.
4. Nm 1, the Census officers.
5. Nm. 1, the census of the tribes.
6. Nm 2, the order of camping.
7. Nm 7, dedication of offerings to the Tabernacle.
8. Nm 13, the twelve spies.
9. Nm 26, the second Census.
10. Nm 34, the nine and a half tribes in the land.
11. Dt 33, the blessing of Moses.
12. Jh 15-21, divisions of land by lot.
13. Jg 1, tribes that made later conquests.
14. I Ch 2. 1, tribal heading to the genealogies.
15. I Ch 2-8, genealogies.
16. I Ch 27. 16, tribal Rulers under David.
17. Ek 48, future division of land.
18. Ek 48, egresses of future Jerusalem.
19. Rv 7, the Sealed of Israel.

Remarks.

1. That so many lists are given shows the great place that

Israel had in the thoughts of God. That five of the lists have to do with times yet to come (Nos. 2, 11, 17, 18, 19) shows how permanent that place is, reaching into the coming kingdom of God on earth.

2. List 1 gives the order of birth of the founder of each tribe. That order is never repeated, but each list has a different order. It would have been natural that 9 should have repeated the order of 4, and still more so that 15 should have followed the order of 14. No reason is obvious for the order of any list save No. 1.

3. No reason seems assignable for the omission of Simeon from list 11. Gn 49. 7 may be suggested, but in that case Levi also should have been omitted, as equal partner in Simeon's cruelty, but it is included. Again, no certain reason seems assignable for the omission of Asher and Gad from list 16, nor of Dan from list 19. But when this last fact is made the basis for asserting that therefore it cannot be the literal Israel that is meant, the reply is obvious: That the omissions and variations in earlier lists do not raise doubt as to the literal Israel being meant, which shows that the argument is unwarranted.

The other event which is shown prior to the final judgments is that a vast company is seen "standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

(1) This scene is in heaven, not on earth, as has been asserted. For (a) the Lamb is not yet on earth, and these are before Him where He then is; (b) the phrase "before the throne" in this book invariably means the presence of God sitting upon the throne as seen in chapter 4. It comes at c. 1. 4; 4. 5, 6, 10; 7. 9, 11, 15; 8. 3; 14. 3. (See on 14. 3.) It is the place of the manifested glory of God, of the elders, of the living creatures, the angels, the glassy sea.

(2) This company is not "Jewish," but comes "out of every nation," even out of "tribes and peoples and tongues."

(3) They are distinctly declared to be "coming out of the tribulation, the great,"¹ the present participle indicating that their removal from the earth and the great Tribulation had only just taken place. This confirms that Seals 5 and 6 immediately preceding apply to the tribulation era.

The present participle *οἱ ἐρχόμενοι*, "who are coming out of the tribulation the great," has seemed perplexing and has been variously explained. As two visions are here interposed between the last two Seals, so in cs. 10 and 11 two are interposed between

¹ See on 11. 17, p. 187 (ii).

the last two Trumpets. In both places the first vision stands in its natural sequence in the series of End events : in both of the second visions there is an unexpected change of tense which seems anomalous. Those who believe that the book is fully inspired by the Holy Spirit will not look for explanations such as that it is a Hebraism, or a mark of indifferent Greek or of poor skill in writing, but will seek some better reason for the changes.

C. II. 2 says of the outer court of the temple that “it *was* (*ἐδόθη*) given unto the nations : and the holy city *shall* they tread under foot forty and two months.” We shall find reason to conclude that the use of the past tense is deliberate, and is intended to carry the mind backward to a point of time prior to the forty-two months ; whereupon the narrative proceeds to describe affairs which will take place during that period and until its close with the death of the Two Witnesses. Having reached that close the prophecy has arrived again at its natural sequence of events and continues the development of the End judgments subsequent to the Tribulation.

Analogy will suggest that the present participle here may be likewise designed to give the mind a backward movement and cause it to take a sweeping glance over the Tribulation period through which these believers have been steadily pressing to the goal. As the mind thus surveys that period it is seen that all through it saints “are coming out of” that Tribulation into the state of purity described by the robes having been washed ; and at the stage of events reached in the visions their number is complete and they are seen before the throne in heaven. From this point, now again reached, the visions resume their sequence, and detail judgments to fall in the post-Tribulation period.

(4) These had found need to wash their robes, which therefore formerly had been defiled. The “robes” are not the man himself, but the outward practices in which the person arrays himself before others, by which he either reveals or conceals the bent of his mind ; which can be kept “unspotted from the world” (Js 1. 27), or be defiled by fellowship with it. Thus these are in contrast to the few in Sardis “who did not defile their garments” (3. 4). To these latter the promise is, “they shall *walk* [habitually] *with Me* in white; for they are worthy”; whereas this other company only *stand* before the Lamb. The former have become “companions of the Messiah” (*μέτοχοι τοῦ χριστοῦ* Hb 3. 14) ; the latter, though highly privileged, are pictured as sheep that He guides (Rv 7. 17). “One star differeth from another star in glory,” and this according to our character and conduct during our earth life. The undefiled overcomers will

escape the tribulation era (Rv 3. 10 ; etc.) ; the defiled believer must endure it unto his sanctification.

The notion that the blood of the Lamb is the medium in which the robes are washed is incorrect. The passage does not say that "they washed and whitened their robes in the blood of the Lamb," but that "they washed their robes, and whitened them in the blood of the Lamb." It is the idea of whiteness added to cleanliness, the art of the fuller supplementing the labour of the washer. This sense of *leukaino* is seen in the only other place where the verb is used, Mk 9. 3, "His garments became glistening, exceeding white ; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them" ; for here the whitening refers to the glistening appearance of the garments, not to their cleanliness. It is not justification but sanctification ; not the judicial standing of the man, but the actual state of his clothes, his outward appearance. Both must be perfect before one can stand before a king on his throne.

Now in the types and in the spiritual reality it is always blood that atones, but always water that washes ; the blood being sprinkled, and the water being used for *immersion* of the man or his clothes. The unseemly conception of washing, bathing, or plunging in *blood* is unknown in Scripture. The only seeming exception is Ps 58. 10, "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance : he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked." The picture is taken from a conqueror's feet plunging into pools of blood as he tramples upon the slain on a bloody battlefield. It is not a washing in the usual sense, and the passage is purely figurative, with no exhortation that this should be done. In Rv 1. 5, "washed us from our sins in His blood" reads properly "loosed us."

The use of water is (spiritually) obedience to the Word of God : "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way ? By taking heed according to Thy word" (Ps 119. 9). Yet however heedful and obedient we may be, and however clean our visible life may become before men, we cannot so perfectly obey as fully to satisfy the eye of the holy God ; there may be general cleanliness but no shining lustre, for the Holy One sees iniquity even in our holy things. To meet this need the blood is available : "If we *walk in the light*"—another way of describing the life of obedience to the light-giving Word—"the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanseth us from *all sin*" (1 Jn 1. 7), including that unknown to the honest heart but known to God, and which to His sight dims the brightness of even the cleanest robe. The blood added to the water secures lustre, as the fuller or the washerwoman adds to the

water certain substances which impart whiteness to that which is already clean.

The point in question has no bearing upon exemption from eternal perdition : that is included in justification and depends not at all upon sanctification ; and justification is gained through faith " by His blood " (Rm 3. 25 ; 5. 9), for " we were reconciled to God through the *death* of His Son " (Rm 5. 10). But the matter has decisive bearing upon the future status, privileges, and glory of the eternally justified. For access to the holy places, and for holy service, the water was as imperative as the blood, the garments of the priest as the sacrifice on the altar (Ex 30. 17-21; 28. 41-43).

The overcomers had attended to this truth, and by grace had kept themselves " unspotted from the world " (Js 1. 27), though walking through its squalid places (I Pt 1. 19), and their dignity and position in heaven will correspond. These of the great multitude had not done so, but needed the pressure of the Tribulation days to constrain them to separateness from the world, and to " cleanse themselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, [thus] perfecting holiness in the fear of God " (II Cr 7. 1). Then at the end they *stand* " before the throne " in wondrous gladness, and render levitical service in the temple day and night (I Ch 9. 33 : Ps 134. 1) ; but of the overcomer the Lord has said he shall " *sit* down *with Me* in My throne " (Rv 3. 21) ; for such shall not be as levites, but shall be priests who reign on thrones (Rv 20. 4, 6), even as Christ shall be priest upon His throne (Zh 6. 13). And the Scripture adds : " He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches " (Rv 3. 22).

Concerning this multitude, it remains only to note that they are seen " before the throne." They are not said to have been taken to the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, but to the throne in the heavens, which is beyond the clouds of this earth.

SEAL 7 (c. 8. 1)

" And when He opened the seventh seal there followed silence in heaven about the space of half-an-hour."

This is all that the seer records concerning this Seal. Its explanation is to be found in the Old Testament. It is never to be forgotten that the *Revelation* concludes and completes the Word of God, and it is pre-supposed that the reader is acquainted with preceding prophecies and will catch allusions thereto. This is a case in point, for in the Old Testament there are six passages which proclaim or enjoin general silence. As these richly reveal

what will take place under this Seal we will examine them with care.

1. *Psalm 76.* This psalm opens with the announcement, “In Judah is God known : His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling-place in Zion.” This will be true in the millennium. Then follows a description of a mighty destruction of an enemy army, that is, the assembled host of the Beast, the scene which occupies the latter part of Rv 19. This is declared to be the issue from a heavenly decree : “Thou didst cause sentence to be heard from heaven ; the earth feared, *and was still, when God arose to judgment*, to save all the meek of the earth” (8, 9). The psalm closes with a call to worship, since He is to be feared who is “terrible to the kings of the earth.”

At the very hour that the Beast decrees that all shall worship himself and his image, an angel denounces eternal judgment against all who shall do so (Rv 14. 9-11) : “Thou didst cause sentence to be heard from heaven.” Under Seal 6, at the close of the Tribulation, men of all ranks are struck with terror : “the earth feared.” At the opening of Seal 7 heaven is silent, and earth is still (comp. Zh 2. 11-13 for the phrase and the period), and this is declared in the psalm to be the time “when God arises to judgment,” to save all the meek of the earth. The silence therefore indicates that the Lord is now just about to act personally in judgment on His foes, and for the salvation of “all the meek of the earth,” Jew and Christian.

In view of the application of this psalm to the Beast, it is of interest that the LXX adds to the heading the words : “A Song for the Assyrian,” a title of the last emperor because Babylon in Assyria will be his capital city (cf. Is 10. 5, 24, and our c. XII).

2. *Isaiah 18.* This remarkable prophecy, though concerning firstly the “land rustling with wings,” includes in ver. 3 a universal call addressed to “All ye inhabitants of the world, and ye dwellers on the earth, when an ensign is lifted up on the mountains, see ye ; and when the trumpet is blown, hear ye. For thus hath Jehovah said unto me, *I will be still*, and I will behold in My dwelling place.”

The Old Testament having less to reveal as to heaven, and being mainly concerned with the earth and its inhabitants, this present series of passages refers chiefly to silence on earth ; but here is a distinct intimation of silence in heaven, and indeed in that upper heaven with which the *Revelation* is so much occupied, even “My dwelling place.”

And the time is just prior to the destruction of the Beast, for Isaiah at once includes a reference by Jehovah to sunshine and heat

and *harvest*, that is, the scorching heat of the great Tribulation, leading on to the harvesting of the saints in the Parousia (Rv 14. 9-16). This is followed by a vivid description of the destruction of a vine, pointing to the vintage which follows the harvest in Rv 14. 17-20, even the destruction of the armies of the Beast, again pictured as a vintage in Rv 19. 15. This destruction the prophet sees as accompanied by the gathering of all ravenous beasts and birds to fatten upon the slain, which connects with Rv 19. 17, 18, where an angel cries to all birds to gather to the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of the slain of the armies of the Beast. And all this is at a time when "the trumpet is blown," even as Christ said that His Parousia would be accompanied by a "great sound of a trumpet," and as Paul says of that same moment that "the trumpet shall sound" (I Cr 15. 52). The Apostle says that this will be the "last trump," and accordingly at the sounding of the last trump (Rv 11. 15-18) the righteous dead are dealt with and rewarded, and also the destroyers of the earth (the Beast and his armies) are destroyed.

Thus in Is 18 the stillness in heaven is premonitory of the bursting of the full storm of divine wrath at the descent of the Lord from heaven.

3. *Isaiah 41. 1.* The second great section of Isaiah commences with the announcement that "the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (40. 5). This "appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" is the "blessed hope" of all the godly (Tt 2. 13). He who can announce that this mighty event is at hand, even that the Lord God will come as a mighty one, is verily a teller of good tidings to Zion (40. 9, 10). Now in connection with this coming the Lord proceeds to say: "Keep silence before Me, O islands; and let the peoples renew their strength: let them come near; let them speak: let us come near together to judgment" (41. 1). Here again is a proclamation of silence before Jehovah at the time when a judgment is pending which shall affect all the peoples. And yet the earth-dwellers are pictured as idolatrous even at this juncture when they fear and tremble (ver. 5-7); and at that time Israel shall be delivered, as is next foretold (ver. 8, etc.).

4. *Habakuk.* The period to which this prophecy points is one of violence and injustice (1. 2, 4), culminating in war issuing from Chaldea (1. 6). The vision is plainly stated to hasten to the end time, or more forcibly, to pant to the end, as a runner urging his last swift but labouring steps to the goal (2. 3). At that end time there is seen a monarch who "gathereth unto him all the nations," and "heapeth unto him all peoples" (2. 5), and

who, in particular, does violence to the land (Canaan) and to the city (Jerusalem) and all that dwell therein (2. 8 : comp. Zh 14. 1-4). This is plainly the Beast, and the period is just prior to the descent of the Lord, for in connection with the woe that shall fall on this king, at a time when mankind labours and wearies itself in vain, it is declared that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea" (2. 12-14). Then after glancing again at the woe that shall overwhelm the king, and especially because of his violence to Lebanon, Palestine, and Jerusalem, and after denouncing a woe that shall destroy the makers and worshippers of idols, this proclamation issues: "Jehovah is in his holy temple: *be silent before Him all the earth*" (2. 15-20).

This reference to the temple in heaven is significant. The seventh trumpet (Rv 11. 14-19) follows the last of the three woes that shall fall, and then also is seen the opening of the temple that is in heaven, and out of that temple come the seven angels to pour out the seven bowls which complete the judgments of God against the Beast, his armies, and his city (Rv 11. 15 ; c. 16).

The prophecy concludes with a vivid poem picturing the coming of God to this earth; it speaks of the repose in Him that shall be the strength of the godly even at the very time of the invasion of Palestine by the Beast (3. 16, marg. 18), and of their joy in God even amidst the desolation and want of that time, and of their final security and triumph when Jehovah shall make them to walk in peace upon their high places.

5. *Zephaniah*. This word of the Lord commences by announcing a thorough sweeping of the land of Judah by judgments that shall utterly consume man and beast (1. 1-6). Four classes of sinners are specified. (1) Worshippers of Baal and of the host of heaven, that is, rank idolaters. (2) Those who swear by both Jehovah and a false god, that is, compromisers with idolatry. (3) Those who did once avow Jehovah, but are "turned back from following Him," that is, apostates. Compare II Th 2. 3, 8: "the apostasy . . . and the man of sin revealed . . . whom the Lord Jesus shall . . . bring to nought by the manifestation of His Parousia"; and I Tm 4. 1: "the Spirit speaketh expressly that in later times some shall apostatize from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits." (4) Lastly, those who "had not sought Jehovah, nor inquired after Him," that is, such as having heard of Him had been indifferent, or who impiously conceived ignorance of Him to be bliss. Comp. II Th 1. 7, 8: "the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven . . . rendering vengeance to them that know not God [class 4 above], and to them that obey not the gospel

of our Lord Jesus" (the other classes). For an old time example the Scripture gives Pharaoh, who said: "I *know not* Jehovah, and moreover I *will not* let Israel go" (Ex 5. 2). All these shall be swept away, even as it is elsewhere written: "the destruction of the transgressors and the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake Jehovah shall be consumed," and this shall be at the time that Zion shall be redeemed with judgment (Is 1. 27, 28).

Having thus indicated that it is the closing judgments of this age of which he is speaking, Zephaniah at once exclaims: "*Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord Jehovah*: for the day of Jehovah is at hand: for Jehovah hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath sanctified His guests" (1. 7), even the beasts and birds called to "the great supper of God" at the slaughter of the armies of the Beast.

The rest of the book details the foretold judgments, from which shall be left an "afflicted and poor" remnant that shall "trust in the name of Jehovah," whom He shall gather, and make a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth (3. 12-20).

6. *Zechariah*. The second chapter of this glowing prophet refers to the period when Jerusalem shall have unrestricted prosperity (4), with Jehovah as its defence (5). The time is that of the final escape from Babylon (6. 7; comp. Rv 18. 4); and the events issue in Zion singing and joying because Jehovah will "come" and will dwell in the midst of her (10, 11). The rest of the nations shall submit to Messiah, Who shall inherit Judah as His portion and shall choose Jerusalem. And in view of this present and visible return of God the word goes forth once more to all mankind: "*Be silent, all flesh*, before Jehovah: for He is waked up out of His holy habitation (13)."

These are all the passages which we have noted as enjoining general, universal silence. They are all connected with the last days, the last judgments, and the actual awaking, arising, and coming of Jehovah to the earth to destroy the Beast and deliver the godly. They sufficiently explain and expand the simple fact mentioned concerning Seal 7 that there was silence in heaven. It is the intense portentous silence that ends in the vivid flash and crashing thunder, followed by a cleansed exhilarating atmosphere and a smiling sunny landscape. Of this one sentence much of the rest of the *Revelation* is an elaboration.

We thus learn that Seal 5 covers the great Tribulation and Seal 6 pictures events that will occur immediately thereafter. Thereupon the godly of Israel are marked for deliverance, and the elect gathered to the Lord are seen before the throne in

heaven; while Seal 7, explained by the Old Testament, covers the closing scenes of this age down to the descent of the Lord to Zion.

Thus it is made evident that the Seals are occupied with the times of the end, and we may now turn back to consider the first four thereof, which will reveal events prior to and leading up to the supremacy of the Beast and the great Tribulation of Seal 5.

These four of the Seals differ from the other three in that (1) each has the same symbol of a rider on a horse, and (2) each rider is called into action by one of the living Creatures, whose nature and office we have before considered. Their single word of command, Come! were perhaps better translated Go! for they are in heaven, and the riders do not come to them, but go forth on earth. Souter, Pocket Lex. NT, gives *go* as the *first* meaning of *ἐρχομαι*. Abbot-Smith has suggested the meaning, "come into public view," as suitable here, a sense of *ἐρχομαι* found in Cremer; this sense agrees with the words immediately following: thus: Appear! *and I saw*.

The horse is a regular figure in Scripture for military measures, and these riders go forth to war, or, in the case of the third, picture its consequences. This indicates that the days preceding the reign of the Beast will be marked, as Christ said, by nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom (Mt 24. 7).

SEAL I

Of the first rider it is said that he goes forth "conquering and to conquer," the participle indicating a career of conquest, and the infinitive following showing that he will reach his goal of supremacy. Now Scripture does not reveal any person of the end days of whom this will be true other than the Beast, but of his career it is an exact summary. For when the fourth empire shall have developed its last stage of a ten kingdom confederacy, the little horn will grow up among the ten and presently will attack and conquer three of the kingdoms (Dn 7. 8-24). Thus the Beast will go forth conquering, nor will he rest until he shall have secured for himself Satan's gift of his own throne with "authority over every people and tongue and tribe and nation" (Rv 13. 2, 7). Therefore is he seen in the vision as having a crown (*stephanos*) as a symbol of royal estate won by conquest.

The much pressed distinction between *stephanos* and *diadeema* is not maintained in Hellenistic and New Testament Greek. In the LXX the former word is used of the *royal* crown in II Sm 12. 30: I Ch 20. 2: Ps 21. 3: Ek 21. 26: Zh 6. 11, 14. In the New

Testament the notion of sovereignty and royalty cannot be excluded from Hb 2. 7, 9, though the verb is *stephanoō*; and the *stephanos* which the soldiers wove for the head of our blessed Lord was in mockery of His claim to be a *king*. No doubt this is an instance of the well recognized fact that colloquial usage tends to blur the fine distinctions of classical usage.

That this conqueror cannot represent Christ is evident from the single fact that the Lamb is in heaven at the throne of God, breaking the seals of the roll of judgment, at the very time that this rider goes forth on earth. As it is the action of the Lamb in heaven that causes the appearance of the rider on earth, they cannot be one person. Moreover, the Lamb is continuously in heaven, breaking the seals, that is, superintending those judgments, during the very period that the rider pushes his conquests on earth.¹

But that he is the one who seeks to take the place of Christ in the government of earth is perhaps suggested by the use for him of the same symbol of a white horse later used of the Word of God at His descent to the earth as conqueror. That the symbol is afterwards appropriated to Christ is no reason for it not being applied to an evil power also. Such application of one symbol to antagonistic persons is well known in Scripture. The world powers that should ravage earth are compared with a lion, a bear, and a leopard (Dn 7); Jehovah compares himself to the same beasts in His dealings in judgment with Israel (Hs 13. 7, 8). Is Satan a raging lion? (I Pt 5. 8); so is Jehovah (Hs 5. 14). That the symbol of a white horse can only apply to Christ is out of the question, for it is applied to an angelic agent of judgment in Zh 1. 8 and 6. 3, which whole passage is part of a series of visions having to do with the judgments of the times of the end. Alford's note on this point in the vision of John is important: "Here the horses and their riders are the various aspects of the divine dispensations which should come upon the earth preparatory to the great day of the Lord's coming. As regards this first, the whole imagery speaks of *victory*. The horses of the Roman commanders in their triumphs were white." He then cites authorities for this. In the absence of specific application of the symbol to Christ, as in c. 19, it is applicable to any conqueror, and it becomes matter for enquiry as to who the conqueror is.

We are helped in this by the fact that he carried a bow. To the Greek-speaking people to whom the *Revelation* was first sent this would have a well-known meaning. The Greeks had an

¹ Upon this argument a judicious critic writes: "I could wish to see this section reinforced. It is the neglect of such obvious canons of exegesis that has made *Revelation* the happy hunting ground of the freak."

established phrase "the drawers of the bow" as a proverbial description of orientals, especially of those of the Mesopotamian and Persian regions. This was in contrast to themselves who relied on the "might of the spear." Alexander's phalanx of spearmen, who contributed so largely to the defeat of the Persians, is celebrated. (See Liddell and Scott, s.v. *τόξον* or *ρόπτη*, and Ramsay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*.)

Thus this whole picture would suggest to those first readers of the Grecian world a conqueror from the east, Persia or Assyria, the then east of the world as known to them; and we know that the Beast is to be "king of the north," that is, of Assyria, with Babylon as his capital. We have not observed any place in prophetic scripture where the term "king of the north" does not refer to Assyria. The Assyrians descended into Palestine from the north, the vast deserts to the east of Palestine making invasion from that side practically impossible in those days. Significant indeed is the present development of that ancient region and its re-organization into a separate state. But how little do the princes of this world understand the true purport and issue of their schemes.

Now within the times of the end there can scarcely be two potentates of whom all this can come true. Only one conqueror can reach supremacy within the same area at the same period, so that this rider must needs be the Beast.

SEAL 2

That the last head of the fourth empire arises as a *little* horn suggests that the Beast will commence his career as an insignificant ruler. It is probably thus that he will succeed in gaining a footing within the ten kingdom territory. A deliberate invasion from without they would unitedly resist; but the unavoidable permutations of affairs public may easily make it convenient that they tolerate the formation of a seemingly insignificant state, which being within their own area they will count upon being able to confine within such limits as they think desirable.

But when the head of this kingdom suddenly attacks and prostrates three of his neighbours, his action will be a violent and alarming disturbance of the confederacy. Its western powers will find themselves confronted with a serious recrudescence of the ever-smouldering near-eastern problem, and will be forced to take urgent measures to reduce to order this truculent and dangerous interrupter of the peace. This will bring on the bloody wars pictured by the rider on the second horse, to whom it

was given to take peace from the earth by provoking men to slay one another. Solemn and illuminating is the lesson that a raging lust to slaughter may be infused into men by spirit powers, permitted of God in judgment so that the world may be rid of the violent. A cavalry soldier described how they hacked their way through the infantry opposed to them, and having reached the further side they turned and hacked their way back. He added that, *of course, they went mad* at such times or they couldn't do such deeds. Ought a follower of Jesus to be found in that state or do such deeds?

As the weapon of the first rider gives the clue to his place of origin and individuality so does the word sword of this Seal reveal the meaning. "To him was given a great *machaira*." This is the word distinctive of the sword of the western armies of John's day (Eph 6. 17 : Rm 13. 4 : Hb 4. 12) in contrast to the term *romphaia* used of the sword mentioned in Seal 4, which word points to the long scimitar characteristic of the east, and is regularly so used in the LXX.¹

That it is a *great* sword suggests how fearful will be the carnage of these frightful wars.

In *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*, cs. 7 and 11, I have sought to detail the rise and career of the Beast.

SEAL 3

One inevitable accompaniment of long and sanguinary conflicts is serious depopulating of large areas, with wholesale destruction of the means of life and cultivation. Thus severe scarcity will seize vast regions in its fatal grip, and the necessities of life will reach prohibitive prices. Grain stuffs will be fetching some twelve times the normal price. Kelly suggests eight times; *Revelation*, note p. 137, ed. 1884. B. W. Newton suggests twenty times the ordinary price as being the force here (*Apoc.* 101), but apparently on his calculation *twenty* should read *eight*, thus agreeing with Mr. Kelly's figure otherwise reached. Smith's *Bible Dictionary* (Art. Weights and Measures) and the Imperial B.D. (Art. Measures) appear to give thirty-two as the ratio; but Charles shows that it was from 8 to 16, and Hasting's B.D. (IV. 432a) gives "about twelve." The only commodities readily available will be those which go on in measure without much cultivating, olives and grapes; but the poor must suffer from scarcity of grains. This sparing of oil and wine intimates the area of the earth in view here, the Mediterranean and near-east,

¹ Mr. Pember first pointed out to me this distinction.

where these trees grow naturally. But there wine and oil are not the luxuries of the rich, but staples of diet for all.

Accordingly, this third rider is on a black horse, perhaps because the skin of the starving goes blackish (Lm 4. 8, 9 ; 5. 10) or to indicate dark despair settling on men in such fearful times. Comp. Lk 21. 26. Perchance the balance that he carries, by which only a given quantity can be measured out at a time, may suggest governmental efforts to ration the meagre quantity of cereals to secure uniform distribution as long as supplies last.

Thus will be awfully fulfilled our Lord's prediction that, consequent upon the international wars of the end, there shall be famines (Mt 24. 7).

SEAL 4

The meaning of this vision has been suggested above. The word for the sword used by this rider describes the weapon of the ancient eastern world. Its use goes back to remote antiquity : the sword which guarded the tree of life in Eden is described by it in the LXX of Gn 3. 24.

In our own days national isolation is already wholly past. In the great war of 1914-1918, West and East, with both North and South America, were irresistibly drawn into the strife. This has been the case in the 1939-1945 wars. Thus will it be again. The far eastern races will be so bitterly affected by the furious wars in the west and the near east as inevitably to be sucked into the maelstrom.

Imagination reels as it contemplates an avalanche of the countless hordes of the east, with their pagan recklessness of human life and cruel callousness to suffering. Napoleon is reported to have said : China is a sleeping giant : let him sleep ! But the great powers of the west did not take this sage advice. They first pricked and goaded him by opium wars and the like, and when he was fairly roused they even indulged in savage talk of dismembering him alive. The student of the Word cannot but watch to see whether the organizing of China under the tutelage of Japan may not prove part of the preparation of the east for its announced part in the times of the end.

One whole fourth part of the earth will be so desolated by the sword that further famine will follow ; while for want of men, or of care to bury the rotting corpses, pestilence will stalk abroad unchecked and wild beasts will multiply and ravage at will. "Death," in ver. 8, means pestilence, as in RV margin. Compare the use of the word by Pharaoh to describe the ravages of locusts

(Ex 10. 17), and note the conjunction of sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts in Ek 14. 12-23. It will be a dreadfully depopulated earth over which the Beast will reign and to which Messiah will later return.

Indeed, so shocking is the carnage that the horse of this Seal is coloured chlorotic, that is, with the sallow hue of the plague-stricken. Still more solemn and significant is the fact that these ruthless armies are seen by the seer as commanded invisibly by the very Angel of Death himself, with the angel ruler of Hades following in his steps to sweep the slaughtered into his awful dungeons. And this conception is so far from being metaphor that it is exactly the reverse. The Scripture frequently confirms this belief of the ancient world in the existence of a mighty angelic executioner and of an angel ruler of the world of the dead. The latter, as the Angel of the Abyss, is even named in Scripture, and in both the Hebrew and Greek forms of his name, Abaddon and Apollyon, each meaning the destroyer (Rv 9. 11). The latter was one of the best-known and most widely feared and worshipped gods of the Greek world.

Several instances of the action of these destroyers on a large scale are on record: as in Ex 12. 30, "There was not a house [in Egypt] where there was not one dead"; and II Sm 24. 16, "the Lord sent a pestilence . . . and there died of the people . . . 70,000 men . . . the *angel* stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it"; and again, II Kn 19. 35, "an angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000 men: and when men arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses."

In this connection there are two Old Testament passages that conjoin Death and Hades in action and show to what period this Seal refers. In Is 28. 14-22, we read of certain scornful Jews that shall rule Israel at Jerusalem, and who shall make a covenant with Death and an agreement with Sheol (=Hades, comp. Ps 16. 10 with Ac 2. 27), and who shall trust therein for protection from the "overflowing scourge." God declares that this scheme shall utterly fail, for the scourge shall sweep over them; and the period is shown to be the time of the end, when Jehovah shall arise in judgment, and the strictly determined consummation shall be reached.

Now it is to be remembered that the Beast, with whom actually this covenant will be made, will have ascended from the Abyss, having been brought up thence by Satan and energized with his wisdom and strength (Rv 17. 8-11; 12. 17; 13. 2). So that the covenant with him will verily be with Death and Hades, of which

he will be acting representative on earth. By this profane alliance the apostate leaders of Israel will hope, though vainly, to escape the terrors of those Satan-driven days. Their sinful turning from God who is light will plunge them into a moral darkness, and they will be too blind to discern that the blandishments of the great Emperor but lure them into his toils to their deserved ruin. He who sups with the devil needs a long spoon, or he gets nothing out of the feast. It remains to be seen whether certain existing international agreements will finally benefit this country.

This connection of Death and Hades is enforced by the other passage, Hk 2. 5. The universal monarch, Antichrist, the Beast, who "gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all peoples," is said to "enlarge his desire as Sheol, and he is as Death, and cannot be satisfied."

It thus appears that, with the view of retaining universal dominion of the earth (ere this time he has lost his heavenly place, Rv 12. 7-12), Satan himself takes the field, summoning to the conflict his infernal subordinates, resuscitating from the dead a former human servant, and drawing into the strife such eager instruments as the eastern peoples. It can be easily conceived that these last will be fearfully ready to seize the opportunity of throwing off the hated domination of the west and avenging themselves for former insults and manifold injustices by wars and otherwise.

All this God will permit as part of His reluctant, but at length unavoidable duty of judgment upon the wicked, in preparation for the setting up of that kingdom in which the righteous shall flourish under the rule of His King (Ps 72).

It will be through this awful welter of blood that the "little horn" will grow great, that the Beast will hack his way to supremacy. And in due time, seeing that peace is imperative, and discerning that one is among them who cannot be defied and who seems capable of ruling universally, the Superman so long desired, the ten kingdoms will unconsciously fulfil the will of God by accepting him as their overlord.

This will entail the complete destruction of that Harlot religious system that claims sovereignty over the kings of the earth (Rv 17), a claim that the Beast will by no means allow so soon as he is in a position, by the support of the ten kings, to throw it off. Then having consolidated his power, and by the sheer weight of the confederacy he rules having constrained the remoter nations to bow to his sceptre, he will duly proceed to his real objective, the attempt to exterminate all Christians and to blot out the people of Israel also. Thus will arrive the great Tribulation, which, as

we have seen, is Seal 5, to be followed immediately by the manifest intervention of the Lord from heaven (Seal 6), leading on at last to His descent to the earth (Seal 7).

It is thus evident that the seven Seals are a sketch of the whole period of the end, from the time when the hour of God's judgment strikes (Rv 14. 7) to the descent of the Word of God to the earth for the destruction of the Beast and all other His enemies (Rv 19).

Seal 1 shows the going forth of the Beast.

Seal 2 pictures the western wars that will be provoked by his aggressions.

Seal 3 indicates the scarcity that will result.

Seal 4 describes the added horrors that will follow upon the eastern world rushing into the strife.

Seal 5 intimates that the Beast has reached supremacy and is persecuting the godly.

Seal 6 declares the disturbances in heaven and earth that will accompany the arising of the Lord, with the consternation of the wicked thereby caused, from which, however, they shortly recover and yet further harden their hearts.

The parenthetical scenes show, the first, that God will take full precautions to preserve from the impending final judgments all those who fear Him; and the second, that the godly of every race who had availed themselves of the blood of the Lamb have been taken to heaven.

Seal 7 brings the programme down to the inflicting of the last judgments, culminating in the descent of the Word of God to the earth, with the fulfilment of all that the prophets had foretold as to accompany that mighty climax (Ac 3. 19-21).

CHAPTER VII

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

(c. 8. 2—11. 19)

I. *Seals, Trumpets, Bowls.*

Three chief series of events will mark the End Days. These are symbolized by three figures of speech, Seals, Trumpets, Bowls.

1. Upon the meaning of the sealed roll see pp. 140, 141.
2. Trumpets were used of old : (i) At Sinai to announce that God himself, as Ruler and Lawgiver, had come down to intervene personally and in power in the affairs of earth (Ex 19. 13, 19). (ii) As battle signals (Nm 31. 6 : Jh 6). (iii) To gather the people together, and (iv) To command the march of the tribes from camp (Nm 10. 1-6). (v) To announce the year of jubilee, release, and freedom (Lv 25. 8-10). (vi) In the seventh month to initiate the era of rest, full atonement, and the feast of booths (Lv 23. 23-43). (vii) To accompany public worship (I Ch 16. 42).

All this finds place in the seven Trumpets. (i) They indicate the great final intervention of God as King and Judge to close this age of Gentile rule (11. 17). (ii) This intervention is warlike, with heaven-inflicted attacks upon the wicked. (iii) During the seventh Trumpet the heavenly people are gathered to the Lord above, the mystery of God is completed, and the saints are rewarded. We may trace here a correspondence to Nm 10. 2-4, in that there are separate gatherings of rulers and of the general company of God's people. (iv) At that era, with the sound of a great trumpet, the tribes of Israel also shall be gathered to their land from Assyria and elsewhere (Is 27. 13 : Rv 18. 4). (v) Under Trumpet 7 there is proclaimed the release of the earth from the thraldom of Satan and its incorporation into the freedom and kingdom of Christ (11. 16). (vi) Thus will be initiated the millennial era, the day when the atonement of Calvary shall be given general effect over the earth and the age of rest arrive. (vii) Then, too, commences the period of full worship by the whole universe, led by the heavenly rulers falling down before the throne of God (5. 8-14 ; 11. 16).

3. A shallow Bowl could be turned over and emptied out by one quick movement, which indicates that those judgments will not be prolonged. It points to completion, not extension of action.

II. *The Trumpets and the 7th Seal.*

It is often taken for granted that the seven Trumpets are the expansion of the 7th Seal. This needs defining and restricting. It is true in modified degree only.

1. If at the theatre, after a peculiarly magnificent scene, the curtain were kept down for half-an-hour, so relatively long an interval would cause the audience rather to expect a new series of events than simply a continuance of the former scene.

2. The literary structure of the Revelation encourages this thought.

(i) In c. 1. 7, the subject having been brought down to the actual coming of Christ with the clouds, the vision then goes back to before the End Times, and reveals the state of the churches, and the prospect of the overcomers in particular, as far on as to that same event and the setting up of Messiah's throne (3. 21).

(ii) In cs. 4 and 5 the visions again revert to an earlier period, the commencement of the End Times and the setting up of the heavenly assize, leading on to the subjection of all things unto God and the Lamb (5. 13).

(iii) Under the Seals the course of the world is revealed, as before was that of the church, and the 7th Seal brings affairs to that same great event, "Behold, He cometh."

(iv) Cs. 12 and 13. Passing over at present the Trumpets, the next visions follow the same course. As will be shown more fully later, the rapture of the Man-child goes back to before the End Times, and at 14. 20 the series closes with the same event, the destruction of the Beast at the descent of the Son of Man.

(v) The Bowls also revert to a point prior to that to which the last vision takes forward the subject, and give a new series of events leading on to the same great Event.

(vi) Analogy will justify the expectation that the Trumpet series follows the same structural plan, and careful consideration supports this.

The feature in view is found within this series itself. The opening scene, the angel of fire casting fire on the earth, leads on to "thunders, voices, lightning, and an earthquake," that is, to the period of the 7th Trumpet (11. 19) and the 7th Bowl (16. 17). Therefore the 1st Trumpet goes back to some point within the period of the opening scene, and then the series goes on to the descent of the Lord.

Again, in 11. 1, 2, which is after Trumpet 6, when John is directed to measure the temple, the thought again turns back to some earlier time, for he is told that the outer court "*was* given unto the nations," not "*is* given" (as AV, quite wrongly), nor

even " hath been given " (as RV, inadequately), but " was given " (*ἐδόθη*), that is, at some preceding period ; and then is recited what will take place during a certain 1260 days down to the murder and resuscitation of the Two Witnesses, toward the close of the End Times.

It may be further noticed that the opening scene of the Trumpets goes back *in thought* prior to the 7th Seal ; for the incense is " added to the prayers of all the saints," which will include the cry in Seal 5 of the saints under the altar. Similarly Trumpet 5 records a reference to those who had been sealed before Seal 7 is opened, and thus it likewise goes back *in thought* before that Seal.

Yet it does not follow from the foregoing that the *fulfilment* of the seven Trumpets will *commence* prior to the opening of the 7th Seal ; but the considerations advanced do suggest that the Trumpets must not be too quickly accepted as co-ordinate with or commensurate with that Seal, but must rather be regarded separately, even though they are to happen within its period.

III. *The Area.*

The necessity for this is seen in that the area affected by the Trumpet judgments is restricted, while that of the seven Seals is not. The OT passages cited as explaining Seal 7 have an universal aspect. Is 18. 3 : " all ye inhabitants of the world " ; Hk 2. 20 : " let all the earth keep silence " ; Zp 3. 8 : " nations, kingdoms, all the earth " ; Zh 2. 13 : " Be silent all flesh." But the region affected by the Trumpets is only a third part of the earth, sea, rivers and fountains, heavenly bodies, and of mankind (8. 7-12 ; 9. 18). This alone shows that the Trumpets are not just an expansion of Seal 7, but are local judgments concentrated upon a particular area of the earth, though operating within the period of that Seal.

What this area is may be learned from the mention by name of " the river the great, the Euphrates " (9. 14), and also of " the sea," which to John on an island in the eastern Mediterranean, watching a mountain falling into the sea, must have meant that Sea, for none other was visible to him. It is thus a region involving the eastern Mediterranean and stretching eastward to Mesopotamia. In my *Daniel* (ed. 3, 107-109) I have said :

From these particulars it would seem probable that the territory of the ten-horned beast, in its earlier stages, will (1) centre in Asia Minor ; (2) on the west will not include Greece ; (3) on the south will not include Palestine, Egypt, Libya, or Ethiopia (Abyssinia) ; (4) on the south-east will include Persia and Elam ; but (5) on its eastern end will have its frontier west of Media, that is, in the land which lies to

the south of the Caucasus, at the present east end of Armenia, and between the north end of Irak and the southern part of the Caspian Sea. If this is correct the ten kingdoms will be in the north-east end of the Mediterranean area, which leaves the central and western parts of the Sea for the three earlier wild beasts.

It is therefore here suggested that it is the proper area of the 4th Beast of *Daniel* 7 which is the third part of the earth affected by the Trumpets. In war an army seeks to restrict the area in which its adversary can operate and to concentrate upon his vital regions. Similarly, the opening Seals involved the western nations in devastating wars (Seal 2) and then the eastern nations (Seal 4). These remoter powers being thus weakened, now the Trumpet judgments attack the central regions of Antichrist's kingdom; and as these attacks effect their purpose and near their end, the Bowls of wrath will be concentrated upon his very throne and his capital city (16. 10, 12, 19); and finally the complete victory will be attained by the destruction of the Emperor himself and his hosts when the Word of God shall take the field in person at His descent to Olivet (19. 11-21).

How profoundly interesting and momentous is the present world-movement with the Mediterranean and the Middle East as its hub. I may quote further from *Daniel* (110), what I wrote in July, 1942 :

The closest scrutiny of prophetic scripture yields, as far as we see, no hint of any power outside of the Middle East dominating that area in the period of the ten kings. On the contrary, as Assyria and Egypt maintain many wars with each other, and as Assyria and Palestine conclude a treaty, evidently these will be independent states, with no such overlordship at that time. It is conceivable that present world movements may result at last in the elimination from that central area of the remoter empires, so leaving the stage open for the arising of the more local powers which are to play the part foretold of them in the closing days of Gentile dominion.

Since the foregoing was written there has entered what may prove a profoundly vital factor in world affairs, the determination of the races of that region to attain political independence, of which the revolt of the Lebanese against the French is an example. The acknowledgment by the Allied Powers (Dec. 1943) of the post-war integrity and independence of Persia is to the same effect.

IV. *The Angel of Incense and Fire.*

The earlier belief, shown in the Apocrypha (Swete cites *Tobit* 12. 15; *Enoch* 20. 7 Gr.; etc.), that there are seven chief angels who stand before God, is here confirmed. They are not of the

twenty-four royal rulers, for these sit, and are around Him, while the seven angels stand, and are before Him. To these seven high officials of heaven is entrusted the execution of the terrific judgments now to be directed against the godless on earth. They are given seven trumpets with which each shall in turn sound an alarm of war against the enemies of God.

2. But while they stand ready to act, but before they do so, yet another angel comes forward, and takes his stand at the golden altar of incense in heaven. The idea that this angel is Christ seems unwarranted. The Protestant recoil from the errors of Rome, though so natural and necessary, went too far; it became a *rebound*, and the balance of truth was lost upon some themes. Because Romanists erroneously prayed *to* angels, and appealed to angels to intercede with God for them, Protestantism failed to see that some angels have priestly functions in the economy of the divine Empire.¹ The whole theme became greatly neglected, and in 1860 no less a scholar than Stier could write that "no monograph upon the Biblical doctrine respecting angels has ever come before me" (*The Words of the Angels*, vii).

That this angel does not represent our High Priest, Christ Jesus, is, we think, evident from these facts. (1) He does not pray *for* the saints, whereas Christ does (Rm 8. 34; etc.). (2) He has no incense of his own to offer; what he uses is "given to him." (3) The position of the Lord Jesus as our Intercessor is that He sits, and is at the right hand of God in the Holy of holies in heaven (Rm 8. 34: Hb 10. 11, 12: etc.); whereas this angel stands, and is at the altar of incense in the holy place.

Upon the function of the elders and of this angel in relation to the prayers of the saints, see on c. 5, pp. 131, 132.

3. It is evident that the prayers here in question are of the type of the demand for just judgment made by the souls under the altar; for having presented the prayers the angel takes of the same fire which had caused the incense to ascend and casts it on the earth, which causes the well-known signs of judgment, thunders, voices, lightnings, and earthquake. This scene is to be compared with the same action in Ek 10. 2, 7.

The statement that these signs "followed" the casting down of the fire is not a strict translation. It is not simply intimated that these things were after the act of the angel, but that they "came to pass" (*ἐγένετο* from *γίνομαι* *to come to pass*) as a result of that act. It is not succession in time that is shewn, but

¹ The idea was by no means new in John's day. The passage from *Tobit* mentioned above (12. 15), dating from cent. 3 B.C., reads: "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and go in before the glory of the Holy One."

cause and effect. The overwhelming afflictions which are to be described are not to be ordinary operations of nature, but will result from the agents (angels) and energies (fire) of God's own presence. Thus they will be irresistible.

The same wrath of God that consumed the Victim on the altar of burnt offerings, even Jesus, in order that sinners might be spared, will consume those sinners who reject that one means of escape and persist in sin. It was one fire that burned on both the altar of sacrifice and the altar of incense. *Now* the great Priest asks for the deliverance of all who draw near to God through Him : *then* the great angel will ask for the due destruction of all who spurn God's grace offered through the great Priest.

4. When these disturbances are next mentioned (11. 19) the order of the first three is varied from thunders, voices, and lightnings to lightnings, voices and thunders, which probably indicates that these will be intermingled rather than follow one fixed order.

That these features recur under the 7th Trumpet and the 7th Bowl indicates that the period covered by the judgments caused by the fire from the altar will extend on to the last Bowl. This is another instance of an opening vision being enlarged by subsequent events. To be more precise, the first enumeration goes only as far as to the earthquake, the two others add great hail to the list. This may mean that the first looks forward only so far as to the earthquake under the last Bowl, but does not include the final judgment of hail ; but I cannot assign reason for the limitation. Or it may mean that the first refers to a different and prior set of events, but if so I do not discern the application or fulfilment. Or it may be that the first enumeration was not complete because fuller enumerations were to follow.

V. *The Trumpets.*

The first four are doubly distinguished from the other three, for (1) the former deal with nature as it affects man, and the latter with man himself. (2) Therefore the three are termed Woes, as being intenser and directly tormenting to man personally. These judgments fulfil God's covenant given to Israel at Sinai (Ex 34. 10) : "Behold, I make a covenant : before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth, nor in any nation ; and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of Jehovah ; for it is a terrible thing that I do with thee." Such events are therefore to be expected, seeing that no marvels of their type have since been seen greater than those Moses had then lately wrought in Egypt. These Trumpet judg-

ments will be wrought before Israel, and will affect them as well as others, seeing that by the time in question they will be located mostly in the Middle East (Is 11. 11; 27. 12, 13).

1. Trumpet 1 (ver. 7). What has been can be, and as hail and fire were rained upon Egypt and the crops perished (Ex 9. 17-35: see also Mc 7. 15), this judgment can be taken literally. The area in question will be suddenly denuded of timber, firing, fruit, and fodder. The effect of this on building, heating, cooking, food, milk, and meat can be imagined. For some time life will be disorganized, man will be enfeebled, and will be very much occupied with obtaining a bare subsistence. It is to be considered that those lands depend upon wood for the purposes for which modern and western lands mostly use coal or oil.

2. Trumpet 2 (ver. 8, 9). As no rational metaphorical sense can be conceived for the sea becoming blood, the creatures in it dying, and ships being destroyed; and as no reason is found for these things not happening; and seeing that in Egypt the waters were turned to blood and the fish did die, we accept this as literal. It is expressly foretold that shipping will be destroyed in the day of Jehovah (Is 2. 16).

But that the instrument for effecting this, "a great mountain burning with fire," is to be thought literal is not so clear, though it is suggested that a white hot meteorite would produce the effects indicated. It has been overlooked by some that John does not say that he saw a great mountain cast into the sea, but "*as it were* a great mountain." This shows it was not a literal mountain but something resembling one for size and fiery heat. Exactly what is represented by this is not indicated. Swete cites *Enoch* 18. 13: "I saw seven stars as great burning mountains," as being "curiously close" to "a great mountain burning with fire." Now in the passage cited from *Enoch* "stars" are apparently rebel angels, as in *Revelation*, for in lines 14-16 following the angel says to Enoch: "This place is the end of heaven and earth: this has become a prison for the stars and the host of heaven. And the stars which roll over the fire are they which have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, because they did not come forth at their appointed times, and He was wroth with them, and bound them till the time when their guilt shall be consummated (even) for 10,000 years" (comp. Jd 6). If this symbolic use of the great burning mountain be adopted the vision will mean that a mighty fallen angel is granted power and freedom to corrupt the sea and destroy life and shipping.

The effect of this dire visitation will be to deprive the lands of the eastern Mediterranean of fish as a food and of maritime

communications. Added to the former reducing of land supplies, this will severely impoverish life, and the loss of the ships will prevent replenishing by foreign imports. Thus easily can heaven blockade whole regions.

3. Trumpet 3 (ver. 10, 11). That a literal star is the instrument that will ruin the springs and fountains of fresh water is beyond reasonable conception. That a star should be called Wormwood itself intimates that the language is figurative. In the Bible, and in this book, a star fallen from heaven is a figure of a fallen angel (Is 14. 12 : Lk 10. 18 : Rv 12. 4). This lends further probability to the view just taken of the "great mountain."

The springs and fountains where rise the great rivers of the Middle East are high on the mountains of Armenia. It would seem that these, and the lesser streams of the whole region affected, will by angelic power be turned bitter and undrinkable. What this will involve of misery and enfeeblement in hot lands is terrible to imagine. As above quoted, "it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee." It must further greatly reduce power to resist and defy God, as well as hinder all vegetable growth, and therefore of recovery from the blasting by the first Trumpet.

Wormwood is mentioned in seven places in OT.

In Dt 29. 18 idolatry is a root which bears gall and wormwood.

In Pv 5. 4 a harlot is "in the end bitter as wormwood."

In Jr 9. 15 to be fed with wormwood and given gall to drink is punishment for idolatry.

In Jr 23. 15 idolatrous and adulterous prophets shall be fed with wormwood and made to drink water of gall.

In Lm 3. 15, 19 the same prophet recites the fulfilment of this threat in Israel because of the wickedness he had before denounced.

In Am 5. 7 mention is made of those "who turn justice to wormwood," that is, who by injustice make life bitter to the wronged.

Wormwood is thus associated in Scripture with injustice, sins of the flesh, and idolatry, and from many passages we know that these commonly resulted from demonism, spiritism. These four abominations are shown as prevalent and incurable at the time and in the area of the Trumpets : see 9. 20, 21. Is not this the lesson enforced by the agent of these judgments being called Wormwood? It is the divine indignation against outrageous wickedness by hardened offenders. Indeed, the way of transgressors is hard.

4. Trumpet 4 (ver. 13). At this point a great voice announces in mid-heaven that the three remaining Trumpets will attack the earth-dwellers yet more terribly, and will be *woeful* experiences.

It is not said that the inhabitants of the earth hear the sound of the Trumpets or of this voice. Does not the fact that the announcer is said to be an eagle indicate the contrary, since it is not God's usual way to send public messages through birds. May not the expression "one eagle" mean that it was that one of the Living Creatures which was "like a flying eagle" ? (4. 8). This may apply to the great eagle of 12. 14 also. These are the only places where an eagle is mentioned in this book.

5. Trumpet 5 (9. 1-11). We have before used ver. 1 as an example of the interweaving of the symbolic and the literal in Scripture language. See p. 19.

(i) The star fallen from heaven is an angel (Is 14. 12 : Lk 10. 18 : Rv 12. 4). Perhaps here it is Satan himself, though not certainly. This star had already fallen from heaven to earth before this Trumpet sounded ($\pi\epsilon\pi\tau\omega\kappa\sigma\tau\alpha$). Comp. 12. 7-9, which precedes the Trumpets.

(ii) The Abyss.

(i) Lk 8. 31. Demons begged Christ not to command them to depart into the abyss. It is therefore (a) a place, or beings could not go there. (b) It is a place demons dread as being for them one of torment. Comp. Mt 8. 29. (c) Christ has authority over that place ; see 1. 8.

Rm 10. 7 : "Who shall descend into the abyss ? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." Therefore (a) it is the place into which Christ went in death. Hence He did not himself at death ascend in person to heaven. It was simply the human spirit which animates the human body which He surrendered to the Father of spirits, while He himself, the person, went to the abyss. (c) The direction of this locality in relation to the surface of the earth is downward : "Who shall descend into the abyss ?" Comp. Eph 4. 9, concerning Christ : "Now this, He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth ?" This fixes the locality of the abyss. OT and NT combine in placing Sheol (Hades) within the earth. Did ancient thought know of any other notion as to the region of the world of the dead ?

(2) The abyss is a fast-closed region, from which there is no escape save by divine permission or command. "The gates of Hades prevail against" all its occupants. This the ancients understood well. As far back as the earliest Assyrian myths it is called "The Land of No-return." Even a goddess (Ishtar) going there on a visit could not leave until a mandate from the supreme god ordered her release (Spence, *Myths of Babylon and Assyria*, 128). This also was a common ancient conception.

So here the abyss is pictured as entered by a shaft closed by a locked door. The star could not open this shaft until a key was given to it. That a literal key could not be given to or be used by a literal star shows that the language is figurative. But the meaning is plain. An angel is granted by God power to open the abyss, that is, to release beings there restrained. But as the "key" is figurative, so will be the "door" and the "shaft." Spirit beings do not need an aperture for their exit. Closed doors do not hinder them or we could shut Satan out of our prayer chamber. It is other bands that restrain such beings. There is to come an occasion when, by authority from heaven, exercised by the "star," the ruler of the abyss (see (3) below) will lead forth some who had been there restrained.

The only other places where the abyss is mentioned will be considered in turn (ver. 11; 11. 7; 17. 8; 20. 1, 3).

(3) *The Angel of the Abyss.* See on Seal 4, p. 160. It is remarkable that in Rome Apollo was known as the Tormentor. (Suetonius, *Augustus*, 70. Cited by Govett *in loco*.)

(iii) The Locusts.

The "key" and the "shaft" being symbolical, so will be the "smoke" that rushes thence and darkens the sun. But one who has seen a flight of locusts (as the writer has in Egypt) will recognize the picture. From a distance the appearance is much like a cloud of smoke, and the sun and air are literally obscured. Seen nearer, the "smoke" resolves into locusts. The individual insects seem to emerge from the "cloud."

Govett, the most able, learned, and thorough of literalists, asks *in loco*, "But who, save one inspired and enlightened of God, could describe to us the shapes of beings from the infernal pit?" Certainly no one, *except* it be the god of this age inspiring *his* prophets. And how have similar conceptions arisen in the minds of men not inspired of God? The figure (see page 196) is copied from C. W. King's *The Gnostics and their Remains*, Ed. 1, 270, Ed. 2, plate J4. He says it is a "Persian andro-sphinx, with bird's (Ed. 2, crane's) or locust's legs, and scorpion tail; a Magian genius. Some such Persian demon St. John must have had in view in his description of the locusts coming out of the bottomless pit (Apoc. 9. 7)."

It may be reasonably inferred that John was shown these beings from the abyss as having the forms described for the same reason that men in general gave to demons such symbolic forms. Why should his readers have supposed otherwise? or how otherwise should they have known the meaning? The genii which guarded the entrance to the Assyrian palaces were pictured each

as a mighty bull, with human head and face, and with wings. Did any one suppose that the demon was actually of that form ? or was not the form rather adopted because he was conceived to have the strength of the bull, the swiftness of the bird, and the watchfulness and intelligence of man, and so to be an efficient guardian of the threshold ?

The same habit of mind and speech is still common. We speak of one as being lynx-eyed or lion-hearted. The medicine man of the savages dresses in animal guise to convey to his victims the notion that he can injure them as can the lion or hyena ; but no savage imagines that the man under the lion's skin is actually so shaped.

Thus these " locusts " are (1) as formidable as battle horses rushing to war, and (2) as invulnerable as the iron breastplates such steeds wore. (3) When a horse bore a crown it signified that such a steed was in the direct service of a sovereign (Es 6. 8) ; and these are commanded directly by the Angel of the Abyss as their king. (4) The sound of their wings is as terrifying as that of a mass of cavalry charging headlong in the battle. But (5) they are not unintelligent ; they have the face of a man ; nor (6) are they revolting to see ; they have the attractive glory of a woman, long hair. Yet it may be that Greek people would attach to this feature the idea of frightfulness in war, because, at least in earlier times, the Spartans wore long hair, and that this was well combed and shining on the eve of battle was a sign of the utmost recklessness of life (Herod. vii. 209 ; Plutarch, *Lycurgus*, c. 22). Or again : King (*Gnostics* 333) states that the Gnostics said of their aeon Sabaoth that " he hath the hair of a woman." Sabaoth was the God of the Jews degraded by the Gnostics into a lesser and evil power. Can any learned reader throw light upon this ? Why did the Gnostics attach to this demigod the " hair of a woman " ? (7) They are ferocious and ravening, with teeth as those of a lion ; and (8) most dreadful of all, they can inflict torment like to that of a scorpion.

They are set forth by this combination of fearful characteristics, though their actual form and nature are not given. What if they are a pre-Adamic earth-race, fallen, irreclaimable (such as, possibly, were those demons of Gospel history, who tormented fearfully the bodies and souls of men), and are now released from their prison for a brief season to punish this later rebel race who, like themselves, have become irreclaimable in wickedness ?

The choice of the scorpion as the agent of this judgment, of torment but not death, is very accurate, for the poison of this creature seldom kills ; but so terrible is the agony they now

inflict that men seek death as a relief ; but the Angel of Death has no permission to gratify their craving, but flees from them instead of hurling himself upon them. This is a time of *torment* ; and John, who had lain in Jesus' bosom, who had felt the throb of His loving heart, yea, had seen Him die in torment to save these very sinners, does not shrink from declaring faithfully that *torment*, even in this life, is inflicted upon the Christ-rejector. It is no wonder therefore if the eternal state shall likewise be one of torment. He who, through love of sin, refuses divine bliss shall know devilish torment.

That these beings are not veritable locusts is shown by the fact that they do not damage grass or other green life, or trees. Incidentally, this shows that vegetation had in measure recovered from the preceding judgments, and that so these visitations cover some fair space of time. We see no reason to take the five months of the present infliction as meaning anything but five months. In the only other place where this period is mentioned it is plainly literal (Lk 1. 24).

It is mankind alone that these may attack, and the only persons exempt in the third of the earth affected are those who have the seal of God on their foreheads. It does not follow that this seal will be visible to men. It will be enough that the spirit agents of wrath will know and respect it. It was thus in Ezekiel's day (Ek 9).

It follows (1) that the region is one where Israelites are then found, which is elsewhere shown to be principally the Middle East (Is 11. 11-16). (2) It shows also that this 5th Trumpet is subsequent to the sealing after the 6th Seal had been opened. How far, far better to be of the persecuted few marked by God for preservation from *His* wrath, than to be of the many who will bear the mark of the Beast and who must endure such a plague as this.

6. Trumpet 6 (9. 13-21). The interposed remark (ver. 12) : "The first Woe is past : behold, there come two Woes hereafter," shows that these two judgments are successive, not overlapping. One is completed before the next commences. It also prepares the mind for developing terrors.

This second Woe is directed by a single voice from the horns of the golden altar : that is, the judgment is a continuance of the response of God to the prayers of the saints presented at that altar (8. 3-5).

This visitation concentrates upon the ancient and the coming centre of Satanic and human authority, Mesopotamia (see on cs. 17, 18). At that time four angels will have been placed there

in readiness for this assault of heaven against the heart of Satan's kingdom. The decisions of world-affairs are made in the world invisible ; which dominant factor politicians ignore to the frustration of their best laid plans. Earlier than this (7. 1) four angels had been seen, not at the centre of human affairs, but at the extremities of the earth, restraining judgments until God's servants had been sealed for exemption. Now, later than that sealing, as noted on Trumpet 5 above, these present four angels are concentrated at the heart of affairs. On the former occasion judgment commenced at remote regions, as foretold : " Evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great tempest shall be raised from the uttermost parts of the earth " (Jr 25. 32) ; now, having swept the outlying regions, the tempest converges upon the central provinces of Satanic empire. God prepares His military measures in advance. These four angel commanders, and their infernal cavalry, had been posted in position, but were held back until the precise hour foreseen by the Supreme Command. As they are bound (*δέω, to fetter*) presumably they are rebel angels, who could not be trusted to await a *word* of command, but would have acted as destroyers before the time.

Now they are loosed. Perhaps the phrase " hour and day and month and year " does not mean for the very hour appointed for action, but may indicate the exact duration of the plague, as " five months " did of the last Woe. On either meaning it is a relief to be assured that most exact and full divine control rules in all things.

What now shall puny men do when four armies, totalling two hundred millions of demons, are directed against them ? Small wonder that a third of mankind succumb : the wonder is that two-thirds survive. These assailants have the eagerness and the fierceness of the war horse snorting for the battle (Jb 39. 19-25) ; their infernal riders have breastplates of fiery red, blue, and yellow, which flash terror ; their lion-like jaws crush and devour ; they diffuse the elements of eternal torment, fire, and smoke, and brimstone (see on 11. 5, and comp. 14. 10, 11 ; 19. 20 ; 20. 10) ; their very tails are armed with serpents' heads, and deal death behind as do their mouths before.

Let the student compare this with Joel's description of the attack of this same army (as we suppose), only there on Palestine and Jerusalem in particular ; and note the place that humiliation and supplication will have in the sealed of Israel securing their deliverance, even as in Ezekiel's day it was those who sighed and cried in Jerusalem that were marked for preservation. Always moral condition in man accompanies divine working for his good.

But men other than the sealed, those not slain by these fearful plagues, do not repent, but continue their insults to the true God by the worship of false gods, with the always accompanying crimes and filthiness.

It is a sad and terrible picture of the moral state of the world in coming days, a picture drawn everywhere by the prophets concerning that era. Those days have not yet come: the Man-child has not yet been taken to the throne of God (12. 5), which is the event precedent to the onset of the End Days: but plainly is the civilized world sinking morally to the level marked. As was said in the last war, so is it still more awfully true to-day, that "we are witnessing the moral death of nations" (D. M. Panton), including those nations before much elevated in morals by the power of the gospel of God, but who now are either mainly indifferent thereto or are openly opposing it. Fearfully foreboding are the present results of higher criticism of the Bible, by destroying general confidence in and reverence for It as God's Word; of the fiction of evolution, by dismissing the almighty Creator and Judge from the minds of His creatures; of every ritualistic religion, by doping sinners with the lie that priests and ceremonies suffice to secure deliverance from deserved damnation, thus making sin easy and safe. Inconceivably awful, in time and in eternity, will be the final harvest of these rank and poisonous crops, by provoking the temporal and eternal wrath of God the Holy.

VI. *The Two Interposed Visions.*

1. *The Strong Angel.*

The reasons given to show that this is the Son of God are inconclusive.

(i) It is said that the cloud is a sign of the presence of God, as at the Red Sea and Sinai. But on both occasions angels also were in those clouds (Ex 13. 21; 14. 19: Ac 7. 53: Gl 3. 19).

(ii) That the angel's face is as the sun is compared with that of the Lord in 1. 16. But in 12. 1 the "Woman" is clothed with the sun; in 19. 17 an angel stands in the sun; and at last "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun" (Mt 13. 43).

(iii) "His feet as pillars of fire" is compared to 1. 15. But there the feet are not as fire, but as burnished brass.

(iv) It is thought that the little opened book in the angel's hand refers to the book that the Lamb took from the Father and had by this time opened. But the article of former reference, "*the book*," is not used, and another word for book is employed (*βιβλαρίδιον* *biblaridion*, not *βιβλίον* *biblion*); and while in

meaning there is not much difference, and in some MSS. the word used of the former book is used here in ver. 8 (as RV and Nestle texts), yet can any reason be given for the change to the word used here three, if not four, times (and used in NT of this book only) save to distinguish it from that former book? ¹

(v) The only point of any weight for the angel being Christ is that the rainbow is upon his head, the sign of God's covenant with mankind. Comparison is made with 4. 3; but there the bow is associated with the throne of the Father, not with the Lamb. Moreover, there is no sufficient reason for identifying the angel (or messenger) of the covenant of Ml 3. 1 with the Lord himself. He is "to prepare the way of the Lord," and also they are distinguished by the terms used: "the Lord . . . and the angel (or messenger) of the covenant." So also in Ex 23. 20-23 and 32. 34 the angel is not Jehovah, for it seems he has no power to pardon transgression, but an angel sent by Him in connection with the covenant then made by Him with Israel at Sinai. The distinction is clear in 32. 34 compared with 33. 12-16. Moses was not content that the angel only should lead them, and his supplication prevailed, so that God said, "My presence shall go." This distinguishes between the Lord and the angel. So in Is. 63. 9 it is said that Jehovah felt with His people in their afflictions, and by means of the angel saved them. It may well be that the mighty angel here, with the sign of the covenant on his head, may be that same angel to whom of old was entrusted the guardianship of Israel, and who is presumably Michael, seeing that he is the "great prince who standeth for" Israel (Dn 12. 1). He is to intervene for them when the time shall have come for their national restoration, which time is the goal of this vision. Comp. 12. 7 ff.

We see no ground for thinking that the Lord leaves His position at the throne until at least the 6th Bowl.

2. This angel takes his stand upon both sea and earth, as if to claim both for Him who sent him.

3. At his mighty voice the whole thunder of heaven spake. But there are things known and said in heaven not yet to be proclaimed on earth, and John was forbidden to write what the thunders said. Compare Paul's statement that in Paradise he "heard words which it is not lawful to utter" (II Cr 12. 4). "Now we know in part and prophesy in part." The Bible is complete as regards the imparting of all that God sees we need to know as

¹ As to ver. 8, one suspects that the Sinaitic and other MSS. are right here, not the Alexandrine and others, and that *βιβλαρίδιον* should be retained, as by Darby (*New Translation*).

yet ; " but then shall I know (understand) fully, even as also I was fully known (understood) " (I Cr 13. 9-12).

4. *The angelic oath.* It is not *inherently* wrong to take oath in the name of God so as to attest the truth of a statement, for this holy angel does it. But all other oaths are prohibited to the Christian (Mt 5. 33-37 : Js 5. 12).

The matter here attested by oath in the name of the ever-living Creator is—that " in the days of the voice of the 7th angel, when he is about to sound, then is completed the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which He declared to His servants the prophets."

(i) *The Mystery.* The word denotes something which having been kept secret is now made known. It need not be anything " mysterious," but may be quite easy to grasp ; but it had been kept secret. The word is used (1) of the kingdom of God in general, as being a reality hidden from unregenerate man, but made known to faith (Mk 4. 11). (2) This mystery contains several dependent " mysteries of the kingdom of God " (Mt 13. 11 : Lk 8. 10). It is the privilege and duty of the disciple to become acquainted therewith, and to make them known, as a good steward of the mysteries of God, using faithfully his Master's property (I Cr 4. 1). (3) This formerly hidden, but now revealed, counsel of God is part of the gospel (Eph 6. 19), of the faith (I Tm 3. 9). It includes (4) the present partial hardening and the future salvation of Israel (Rm 11. 25-32) ; and (5) it is concerned pre-eminently with the calling of Jew and Gentile into that fresh circle of believing men known as the church of God (I Cr 2. 7 : Eph 1. 9 ; 3. 3 ; 4. 9 : Cl 1. 26, 27 ; 2. 2 : Rv 1. 20). (6) A special part of this last element of the mystery is (a) the present union of Christ and His people, as the basis of their hope that they will be associated with Him in His glory (Eph 5. 32 : Cl 1. 27) ; and (b) the prospect that not all so united to Him will die, but that some will be alive on earth at His parousia, and will be instantly changed, glorified, and rapt to heaven with such of this fellowship as had died (I Cr 15. 50-58 ; comp. I Th 4. 13-18).

The doctrine of the forgiveness of sins through atoning sacrifice had been made known in all ages and was no mystery. In itself it occasioned no special opposition from mankind, for, speaking generally, all races owned it in principle. But the implications of the mystery involved finally so great an overturning of existing institutions, and so complete a destruction of Satan's kingdom and authority, in order that the earth may pass into the kingdom of God and be under His authority, that evil spirits and evil men

combined vigorously to oppose the whole scheme, and it demanded signal courage and fortitude to proclaim it boldly and worthily (Eph 6. 19). This is still the position, and will be to the end of this age.

For there is a parallel and antagonistic "mystery of Lawlessness" already at work (II Th 2. 7), which is the secret counsel of Satan's kingdom, also unknown to most of its human victims, but the "deep things" of which are known to those initiated thereinto (Rv 2. 24). This will culminate in "Mystery Babylon the Great," and will be exposed and destroyed at the same epoch as the mystery of God shall be completed. See on cs. 17, 18. It is in contrast to this that the strong angel speaks of the mystery of *God*.

It is to be noted that the angel's statement corresponds to that of Paul to the Romans (Rm 16. 25-27). The angel speaks of (a) the mystery of God, (b) which He evangelized, (c) to His servants the prophets. Paul speaks of (a) the mystery as being (b) according to his evangel, and (c) now made known through prophetic writings.

Founded on justification and the new birth, the mystery embraces good news for Israel and the nations, for the whole earth, and for heaven; the good news that God will overthrow evil and establish His righteousness, to the blessing of all who repent of sin. It tells of "compassion like a God," of salvation, personal and universal, on the grandest scale. This is God's full evangel. Alas, that, the centuries through, comparatively few preachers, ministers, evangelists, missionaries, or even teachers, have known *this* gospel or made it known, save as to its initial feature of the forgiveness of sins and deliverance from damnation.

(ii) *The Completion of this Mystery*, according to the statement on oath of the great angel, is to be "in the days of the voice of the 7th angel, when he is about to sound." The right meaning of this statement is fundamental to understanding much else of the divine program.

(i) As shown above, the mystery concerns the purpose of God regarding the church, Israel, the nations, and the setting up of the sovereignty of God on earth, all as one conjoint matter; as the first mentioned passage says, "Unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God" (Mk 4. 11), not first of all the mysteries, though in the parallel passage (Mt 13. 11) the plural is used, "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." The statements together show (a) that, for the purpose of the instruction being given by the Lord, the "kingdom of heaven" and the "kingdom of God" are one kingdom, named first by the name of the Sovereign, and

then by the place whence the kingdom originates and has its centre ; and (b) as before remarked, that the one mystery contains subordinate mysteries. This instruction was given to the apostles who were to build up the church of God by that preaching of the word, that scattering of the seed, which the Lord had commenced. Thus the mystery as a whole includes the mystery of the church as a component part.

All this now revealed dealing of God with Jew, Gentile, and the church of God is to be completed at the same great crisis, signalized in these visions by the 7th Trumpet. This shuts out entirely the idea that the church will have been completed and glorified prior to that Trumpet. Whatever living members of that company may have been removed from earth in advance—as the First-fruits, and perhaps others—the completion of the church by a joint resurrection and rapture attends the 7th Trumpet. The dissociating of the church from the mystery of God as a whole, and the constituting it a separate disconnected mystery, is the exegetical mistake which has involved the program of God in much confusion in many minds. Truly the church has an unique and supernal portion in the counsel of God ; but nevertheless that secret counsel, that mystery, must be regarded as one whole scheme if its parts and development and completion are to be comprehended accurately.

As a master general causes all sections of his force to converge on one place at one time, and so brings to a victorious end a long campaign, so the divine movements of the ages, for the glory of Christ and of the church, for the reuniting of the dead and the living, for the blessing of Israel and the nations, for the unity of heaven and earth in the one kingdom of God, all come to completion at the one mighty event, the coming forth of the Son of God from heaven with power and great glory. “The *appearing* of the *glory* of our great God and Saviour” is the blessed hope of the church, as of all creation (Tt 2. 13).

(2) The strict sense of the angel’s words must be gained. And first, the AV rendering “when he shall *begin* to sound” is without warrant, and by being too precise is misleading. The Greek has nothing corresponding to the word “begin.” The RV reads, “when he is about to sound,” which implies “just before he does so.” But this is impossible, for it is certain that the mystery of God is not to be completed just before this Trumpet, nor is any one part of it. This will become evident when we examine the Trumpet and the Bowls.

The phrase is ὅταν μέλλῃ σαλπίζειν (*hotan mellē salpizein*), the subjunctive of *μέλλω* (*mello*) followed by the infinitive. This

construction seems to be found in the NT on only one other occasion, recorded at Mk 13. 4 and Lk 21. 7 ; and it is most noteworthy that this occasion is concerned with precisely the same mighty crisis epoch as is the statement of the angel, that is, the close of this age. The four disciples (of whom the writer of the *Revelation* was one) asked the Lord, " Tell us, when shall these things be and, what the sign when these things are all *about to be accomplished?*" (*ὅταν μέλλῃ συντελεῖσθαι*, or in Lk *γίνεσθαι about to come to pass*). It is clear that all those things then in the mind of the questioners could not happen in a point of time, but were of necessity to be spread over some period of time. In the light of this the words of the angel can imply that the mystery of God will be completed during the period of the 7th Trumpet ; for it is equally obvious that all the matters included in the mystery of God cannot come to pass at a moment of time, but must cover some period of time. Upon this see the Note at end of this chapter.

5. *Eating the Book* (ver. 8, 11). Comp. Ek 2. 8—3. 3. This eating indicates that a prophet must receive into his very heart, and assimilate into his own mental and spiritual being, the message he is to deliver to others. If truth be only repeated, without being a vital force to the speaker, he is but a parrot, not a prophet ; and the voice of a parrot carries little conviction to the conscience of the hearer, not even if the words be true. The prophet learns that God's words are sweet, for they impart fellowship of mind with Himself ; but also that they are bitter, on account of their ofttimes fearful import for many hearers.

That the eating of *this* book would empower John to prophesy *again* concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings, argues that this book is not the same as the book that the Lamb had taken ; because almost the whole, if not the whole of the contents of *that* book was now already known to John. This " little book " was (a) smaller than that book, and (b) enabled him to prophesy *again*, i.e. it imparted further information.

VI. 2. *The Temple and the Witnesses* (II. 1-13).

1. *The Temple*. The scene now shifts from the shore of the Mediterranean to Jerusalem, the place of God's temple (ver. 1), and " the great city where the Lord was crucified," and which, spiritually speaking (ver. 8), is called Sodom (Is 1. 10 ; 3. 9 : Jr 23. 14 : comp. Ek 16. 46-49), and Egypt (comp. Ek 23. 3, 8, 19, 27).

This temple is still God's temple and this city is still the holy city. The latter was set apart by God for Himself, to be His

centre on earth. Its faithlessness to Him, its defilement by the sins of His people, its destructions under His purging judgments, do not alter His choice and purpose. After its total destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, such a man of faith and communion with God as Daniel could still pray for it as God's city bearing His name (Dn 9. 17-20). Later again, God's choice of it as His city was mentioned in heaven as still operative (Zh 3. 2), and this in a vision looking prophetically to the very period to which Rv 11 looks forward. The Son of God in His day owned Jerusalem as the city of the great King (Mt 5. 35); and in the days of Messiah its name shall be, no more Sodom, but Jehovah Shammah, Jehovah is there! (Ek 48. 45). Therefore, just before this last mentioned period, when John's vision is about to be fulfilled, it is still the holy city, because claimed by God as His centre, where also, amidst general apostasy, Jewish as well as Gentile, some will be worshippers of Himself, the true God.

That there will be at Jerusalem a temple to be built by Messiah, to be the centre of worship of the living God, is proved by these many passages: Ps. 66. 1-4, 8, 12-15; Is 19. 21; 27. 13; 66. 20-23; Jr 33. 14-18; Ek 40-48; Hg 2. 6-9; Zh 6. 12, 13; 14. 9, 11, 16-21. These passages unite in foretelling that Messiah shall build a temple at Jerusalem, that priests and Levites shall there minister, that feasts shall be kept, and that Jews and Gentiles shall offer sacrifices, prayers, and worship. Thus shall be fulfilled the purpose of God, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Is 56. 6-8), which it never yet has been. The boldest ought to hesitate to emasculate this whole body of testimony, in spite of the difficulty felt by some that the resumption of sacrifices seems to conflict with the teaching of *Hebrews* as to the cessation of sacrifice. Bacon's sound canon is valid in this case: that if a matter be once established by adequate evidence, no objections can overthrow it; because in such case belief is founded upon our knowledge, but objections upon our ignorance.

But that temple is not the one in view in Rv 11, for the latter is already there in the time of the Beast, before Messiah's coming. That a prior temple will be built is plain from Dn 8. 9-14; 9. 27; 12. 11; Jl 2. 15-18; Mt 24. 15, and our passage. This last place intimates that there will be an altar, implying that sacrifices will be resumed, and that there will be worshippers, including that "very small remnant" of Isaiah (1. 9; 10. 20-22; etc.), and those that "fear Jehovah" of whom Malachi wrote in connection with the day of wrath, and who will be remembering the law of Moses, though at risk, and often at the cost, of life itself (Ml 3. 16; 4. 6).

2. *The Measuring of the Temple.* When a surveyor receives instructions to measure up a long-neglected property it may be presumed that the owner is about to resume active interest in it. Thus when Zechariah saw in vision Jerusalem being measured, it was because the time had arrived for Jehovah to come and to dwell there (Zh 2.). Similarly, when Ezekiel in vision (cs. 41, 42) witnessed the measuring of the temple, it was because the glory of God was about to return thither (43. 1-5).

This meaning of the measuring shows with certainty that the fulfilment was far distant from the time when John lived, and is still future to-day, for Jehovah has not yet returned to Zion, neither since John's time has there been there any temple to be measured. It further establishes that the visions shown to John, of which this is part, have reference to the End of the Age.

3. *The Outer Court.* This was not to be included in the survey, because it was given to the nations. There is here a notable exactness, showing the precise point of time in view so far. The point of time is while the outer court is overrun by Gentiles, but the sanctuary and the altar are as yet unprofaned. But older prophecies make clear that, before the end of things, (1) the abomination that maketh desolate (presumably an image of the Beast) is to "stand in a holy place" (Mt 24. 15 mgn; Gr. *ἐν τόπῳ ἀγίῳ*); (2) that the Beast himself will proceed much further than this in aggression against God, for he will make all sacrifice to God to cease, so that thus the altar also will be profaned; and (3) that he will thrust himself forward into the sanctuary itself, which was in the inner court, and sit there proclaiming himself as the only object of worship (II Th 2. 3, 4); and (4) finally, he will cast down the sanctuary itself (Dn 8. 9-14). Such will be the end of this premillennial temple.

This will be the day of the capture and desolation of the city foretold in Zh 14. 1, 2, and by Christ: "When therefore ye see Jerusalem being encompassed by armies (*κυκλούμενη*), then know that her desolation is at hand" (Lk 21. 20). From that time the city shall be trodden down by the Gentiles without cessation until the Lord shall descend suddenly to destroy the Beast (Zh 14. 3, 4: Lk 21. 27: Rv 19. 11-21).

The statement by Christ just mentioned must be considered with care: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk 21. 24).

(1) To tread down (*πατέω*) cannot be said of the peaceable holding of a city, as of the long Turkish occupation of Jerusalem. To the Moslem it is one of the most sacred of cities, because there (as they say) Abraham offered up Ishmael their forefather, and

there they have the great mosque which still defiles God's holy place. The very wall of the city now standing was built by Selim I in 1517, which protecting of a city is the very contrary of treading it down. Again, the present extending and beautifying of Jerusalem under British rule is also the very opposite of treading it down, for the term imports violence and destruction, as when one fiercely crushes a serpent under heel (Lk 10. 19), or as men trample grapes to pulp in the winepress (Rv 14. 20; 19. 15).

(2) Our present passage is the only other place where the word is found in NT: "the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." This must be the event to which Christ pointed, because, though Jerusalem was trodden down by the Romans in A.D. 70 by Titus, and again in A.D. 132 by Hadrian, those treadings down did not continue until the end of the times of the Gentiles. It has been only by treating these words of our Lord with most unwarranted looseness that they have been supposed to refer to A.D. 70; whereas taken strictly, and in connection with Rv 11. 2, they are of the utmost value by showing distinctly the epoch when the times of the Gentiles will run out, that is, at the close of the three and a half years of treading down by the Beast.

Now here John has in vision been taken back to the stage of events when the sanctuary, the inner court, its brazen altar, and its worshippers, are still unmolested, but the outer court is in use by the Gentiles. The change of tenses here introduced is not an anomaly, but is highly significant: "the outer court *was* given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city they *shall* tread under foot forty and two months". See on c. 7, pp. 147, 148. (2) Thus his mind has been carried back to a little before the 5th Seal and the Tribulation. The seven years' covenant between the Beast and the apostate majority of Israel is in force; the worship of God is thus far undisturbed and the true worshippers can attend at the altar. At this point the vision turns forward and supplies details of some essential doings in Jerusalem which will lead up to and justify the overwhelming of the Beast and his supporters under the third Woe, the seven Bowls.

4. *The 1260 Days and the Two Witnesses.*

Under his covenant with Israel the subjects of the Beast naturally have access to the city, and they are permitted to enter the outer court of the temple. As before in NT times, so at the close of this age, that is the court of the Gentiles. But in the midst of the seven years of the treaty the crafty Wild Beast

violates its terms, uses his access to the land and the city for further aggression, prohibits the worship of God, ordains that of himself, and proceeds to enforce his law of an universal religion under extreme penalties and persecution. On this see on c. 13, and on c. 17 as to his ascent from the abyss.

The present vision brings into relief a measure taken by the Almighty to strengthen the courage of the godly all through the period of that Tribulation, and at the same time to restrain their foes and warn these of His wrath. Jerusalem will be the vortex of that whirlpool of trouble, and God will send the Two Witnesses to stand for Him at the very heart of the battle ; which they will do for its full period of 42 months, 1260 days, or three and a half years.

The details will transpire just as stated, and we need comment only on the figures of speech used ; only premising first that it is not indispensable and not possible to identify the Two, but we think they may be Enoch and Elijah, if for no other reason than that these are the only two men who have not died. It is plain that Elijah is to be on the earth at that very period to work in the hearts of Israelites (Ml 4. 5, 6 : Mk 9. 11-13). Moses having been already taken from the world of death to that of glory in heaven cannot be thought of as dying a second time. (Lk 9. 30, 31.)

The figures used of the Two are three.

(i) *Olive trees* (4). Comp. Zh 4. These are so full of the Spirit, as olive trees are of oil, that they can impart His grace to others to shine in that deep darkness.

(ii) *Lampstands* (4). In Zechariah's vision the olive trees fed the lamps ; here the same persons are also lamps. So inwardly enriched are they by the grace of the Spirit that they have in themselves the energy to shine as witnesses for God.

(iii) They are pictured as belching forth fire to devour those who fain would destroy them. In this they resemble the "horses" of Trumpet 5 (9. 17, 18). Will those who take this literally say whether "the sword that goeth forth out of the mouth" of the Son of Man (1. 16) and the Word of God (19. 15) is a literal metal sword ? If the latter is a symbol of power to slay, why shall not the fire be such ? Again, when it is said that "Saul was breathing threatening and slaughter against the saints" (Ac 9. 1), did something actual, called "slaughter," come out of his mouth ? And what is the force of the statement concerning the Lord, when destroying the Lawless One, that He "shall consume him with the breath of His mouth ?" (II Th 2. 8). Is not "the breath of His mouth" the plain equivalent of "the sword that goeth out

of His mouth ? ” and do not both mean His word of command ? Speaking of His words of judgment through His prophets God has said, “ Is not My word as a fire ? ” (Jr 23. 29). Thus by words of fiery wrath shall these two prophets, and the “ horses,” i.e., demons, destroy. Let the reader study Ps 18. 8; as a picture of God acting in wrath, and Jb 41. 18-21, the description of leviathan. All these and similar passages show the feature of the symbolic and the literal being interwoven.

5. *Their Death.* The Witnesses are immortal till their work is done. Then they are permitted to confirm their testimony by death. How fearful will be the power of the Beast that he can conquer even these Two. Well may his devotees exclaim, “ Who is able to make war with him ? ” (13. 4). Well may the godly tremble at this his victory over God’s champions. Now will his full supremacy seem assured : now will the impious rejoice, congratulate one another, and treat the corpses with contempt. This last indignity was common in the “ dark ” ages ; and the world is even now retrogressing morally and will reach the darkest age.

But God Who raised up their Lord from the dead will raise up these also by His Spirit who shall dwell in them, and after only the same period of death as was the portion of their Lord. They too shall ascend into heaven, and the faces of beholders shall blanch with terror. This, at least, shall be no secret rapture. As earthquake accompanied the resurrection of their Lord at Jerusalem, so shall a mighty earthquake again rock that city, a tenth of it shall fall, and 7000 sinners perish. Attempts to “ spiritualize ” such details are hopeless ; their plain sense is simple. It is to be observed that in that city at that particular time the hardening of men is not so complete as over the earth in general : comp. 9. 20. Perhaps the influence of the Witnesses and of the godly has been as salt, retarding corruption locally, and so some “ give glory to the God of heaven.”

It seems possible that the “ great multitude ” of c. 7 and the “ victors ” of 15. 2 are taken up at this same time. It is at least clear that they all are rapt to heaven about this period, for all have passed through the Tribulation under the Beast.

It is not said that the Lord descends for these Two. The voice (not a person) comes from *heaven*, and calls them *thither*. As they go a cloud hides them from further view, as a cloud had hidden their Lord as He went up. But He did not remain in that cloud, but ascended into heaven itself. Thus are these vindicated and honoured by their God. Resurrection and rapture will outbalance all sufferings on earth.

“ O happy band of pilgrims,
 Look upward to the skies,
 Where such a light affliction
 Shall win so great a prize.”

It is for this critical point in those dread days of the End that God graciously affords encouragement by means of this vision of the measuring of the city, intimating that the time has arrived for the fulfilment of Zechariah’s vision, for He is about “ to return to Jerusalem with mercies, and will dwell in Zion ” (Zh 1. 16 ; 2. 10-12).

The 3rd Woe has yet to burst, but it will be the divine means of destroying the Beast, personal and as an empire, and of freeing Palestine and the earth from his fierce, satanic oppression.

7. *The Seventh Trumpet* (11. 14-19).

1. The announcement (14) that the “ second Woe is past ” shows that there is an interval between the second and the third Woes. The words added “ Behold, the 3rd Woe cometh quickly ” both awaken attention, and state that the interval will be brief. Judgment is God’s strange work, and He delays it to the fullest justifiable limit and then hastens its execution. This principle of His action does not agree with the idea that the judgments of *Revelation* have been spread over nineteen long centuries.

2. Here again we should not translate “ the 7th angel sounded, and there *followed* great voices,” for this suggests that the Trumpet has ceased to sound before the voices spake. It reads here also “ there came (ἐγένοντο) great voices,” which leaves open the point raised. We shall find that the period of this Trumpet extends to the “ great hail ” which accompanies the destruction of Babylon the great, the capital city of the Beast (11. 19 ; 16. 17-21), which event is celebrated by rejoicing hosts in heaven as proof of the sovereignty of the Almighty and that the marriage and the kingdom of the Lamb are come (19. 6-9).

3. The statement by the great voices (15) is that “ the kingdom of the world *became* (ἐγένετο) the kingdom of our Lord and of His Anointed, and He [our Lord] shall reign unto the ages of the ages.”

(i) The Lord of this place is the Father of the Lord Jesus, who is His Anointed. For this use of *Kύπιος Kurios* see, e.g., Mt 11. 25 : Ac 4. 26 : I Tm 1. 14 : Hb 12. 5, 6, 14 : Rv 4. 8 : etc. That this divine title is given to Christ also is notable proof of His deity.

(ii) The great voices speak here as looking back over the period

of this Trumpet from the standpoint of its fulfilment. Even so, as we saw, does the close of c. 5 anticipate the final outcome of the intervention of the Lamb, the subjection of the whole universe to God. And as then the remainder of the book proceeds to show the stages by which that outcome will be reached, so here the Bowls will tell how the recovery of the kingdom of the world by God will be effected by the crushing of all rebels.

4. At the proclamation of the great voices the twenty-four elders fall on their faces and worship God. How reverently the noblest princes of heaven deport themselves before God. We, who as yet are lesser than they in power and glory, do well indeed to "serve God with reverence and awe" (Hb 12. 28).

It is to be observed that the elders are still occupying their thrones. The Lamb has not yet taken His throne, and His co-sovereigns with Him, and so the hitherto existing government of the universe has not yet been superseded. As heretofore, the grounds of their worship are found in the omnipotence and eternity of the Lord God, not in any relation of Father and child as with the new-born sons of men. Their thanksgiving specifies seven transactions, which must be examined fully. They are a *résumé* of the whole of the End Time.

(i) "Thou hast taken Thy great power." This is literally "Thy power the great"; comp. 7. 14, "the tribulation the great." Comp. also II Sm 18. 9 LXX: "the mule came under the thick boughs of the oak the great," clearly meaning some one oak which signally exceeded the ordinary size of oaks.

God has always been exercising some measure of His inherent power, but at the time in question He had developed into action the full greatness of His power. No ordinary work was to be done, and no ordinary measure of energy would suffice. Essentially, infinite energy can be neither augmented nor diminished, but its exercise can know both.

C. 12 and 13 will show the precise point of affairs when God so drew out into activity the reserves of His energy. C. 12 tells of the removal to the throne of God of a Man-child (5). This precipitated war in heaven between Michael and Satan, which ended in the latter being cast down to the earth (9). To carry forward the war on earth the Dragon brings up the Beast (13. 1), whose career is then outlined. This will be examined in our next chapter. Here it suffices to point out that the ejection of Satan from heaven is occasion for a great voice in heaven to say, "Now is come the salvation and the *power* and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Anointed" (10). This is therefore just

before the End Times begin, since these set in through the entrance of Michael into the war (Dn 12. 1) and the casting of Satan to the earth and his acting through the Beast. This rapture of the Man-child is the earliest event of the future mentioned in the *Revelation*, and precedes immediately the End Times.

(ii) "Thou didst reign," or "Thou reignedst," or "Thou didst begin to reign." There is a sense in which God is the perpetual ruler of all His creation. Faith knows this and counts upon it. See II Ch 20. 6 : Ps 59. 13 ; 89. 9 : Dn 4. 26 ; 5. 21. But the last cited book shows that this rule is at present exercised ordinarily through angel princes, of whom the 24 Elders are the seniors. But at the point to which these Elders now refer God had Himself taken up the actual sovereignty and was personally directing the government. This hour is the burden of the twenty-five or twenty-six other passages where God is said Himself to rule or reign ; they are prophetic. See these two words. This change from superintending, as one in the background, to direct activity as Sovereign, must needs be portentous. The occasion was the establishing of the royal session portrayed in cs. 4 and 5. From that hour God was acting directly, through the Lamb, His Anointed.

The past tense used "reigned" (*ἐβασίλευσας ebasileusas*) is once more not a grammatical anomaly. In the LXX it is used in several passages where the sense is "began to reign," as the Hebrew is rightly rendered in AV and RV. See I Kn 22. 41 : II Kn 3. 1 ; 15. 13 : II Ch 29. 1 : and comp. I Kn 1. 18. See *Speaker's Comm.* on Ps 93. 1, which place also has the tense. This verse is to be noted as being in strict accord with our passage and millennial in setting. "Jehovah reigneth, He is clothed with majesty; Jehovah is clothed with *strength*; He hath girded Himself therewith : the world also is established, that it cannot be moved." The last clause shows that the fulfilment must be after those shattering earthquakes and overturnings of the mountains foretold as to come in the End Days. In order to effect this establishment of the earth Jehovah takes His great power and reigns. A. T. Robertson translates our passage by "assumed rule" (*Grammar* 834).

(iii) "The nations became wrathful" (*ωργίωθησαν orgisthesan*). The effect of this divine interruption of their doings and plans was to provoke the immediate, united, and fierce hostility of the nations, incited thereto by the Dragon, now confined to the earth as his sphere of operations. It is the fulfilment of the second psalm : "Why do the nations rage ?" and of Ps 99. 1, where the

LXX has the same Greek words as here: ἐβασίλευσεν . . . ὅργιζεσθωσαν.

(iv) "And Thy wrath came" (*όργη orgē*). This angry outburst did not alarm the Lord God the almighty. To Him the nations are but as a drop in the bucket. He replied thereto by letting loose His wrath; even as the same second psalm (4, 5) continued: "He that sitteth in the heavens ('I saw a throne and one sitting thereon') shall laugh . . . Then will He speak unto them in His wrath."

(v) "And the season (*καιρός*) of the dead to be judged": *not* "the season when resurrected saints shall be judged," but "the dead." Saints in everlasting deathless bodies are never misdescribed as "the dead." On this see on 20. 11-15, Ques. 4, p. 350 and p. 80. It is clear that it cannot here include the wicked dead for they will not be judged till a thousand years later (20. 5).

The verb *κριθῆναι*, "to be judged," is the inf. pass. aor. On this I have said in *Firstfruits and Harvest* (81):

Being an aorist it has the force of a completed and final action. But this final judgment, which disposes of the case, may be the conclusion of a process of judgment. This is seen in another place where this aorist is twice used, Ac 25. 9, 10. Festus asked Paul whether he would be willing to go up from Caesarea to Jerusalem "there to be judged of these things before me." Paul answered that he already stood before Caesar's court "where I ought to be judged" (*κριθῆναι* *krithēnai*). Both Festus and Paul meant that a final verdict should be reached and the case be determined: hence the aorist. But the history shows that Paul had been many times before the courts, twice before the Sanhedrin and several times before Felix (Ac 23 and 24). Thus this passage in Rv 11. 18 does not forbid that believers may have been before judged by Christ, either in this life or after death, or both; what it states is that at the season indicated the decision of the Lord will be given, announcing, as we suggest, whether the person is of the "blessed and holy" who are accounted worthy of the impending resurrection from among the dead and of place and reward in the kingdom then about to be inaugurated.

(vi) "And [the season] to give the reward to (a) Thy slaves the prophets, and (b) to the saints, and (c) to them that fear Thy name—the small and the great." The reward (*μισθός misthos*) is to be given by the Lord at His coming (22. 12); therefore this clause presumes that He has come, and that consequently the dead, who had just before been judged, and accounted by the Lord to be worthy of the first resurrection and to share in His kingdom (Lk 20. 34-36), have been raised. From I Cr 15 and I Th 4 we know that the then living saints will have been taken

up with them to meet the Lord in the air. Christ had promised to such as should walk by His precepts and example that " thou shalt be recompensed in the resurrection of the righteous " (Lk 14. 14), and to those who should suffer for being righteous He had said that " great is your reward (*misthos*) in the heavens " (Mt 5. 12). It is to be much observed that this reward is a *misthos*, wages for work done (Rv 22. 12, mgn.), not a free gift as are justification and eternal life (Rm 3. 24; 6. 23).

The three classes mentioned are to be distinguished.

(a) The prophets : men who by unstinted devotion and unswerving obedience had lived out in the practice of life the title " bondservants, slaves," who had been leaders in the cause and conflicts of their Lord, and who in consequence had suffered in this life heavier loss than do most. They are at the opposite extreme from those believers who as far as possible avoid reproach and loss and who get on well in this world.

(b) The saints (*āγιοι hagioi*) : the general body of believers who walked in separation from the world, in holiness of life, who were salt amidst corruption and light in darkness. This word " saints " is their frequent designation in the Epistles, and its use here connects the *Revelation* with those earlier apostolic writings. They were marked by prayer (5. 8; 8. 3, 4); they faced the war with the Wild-Beast (13. 7); they shewed faith and patience (13. 10; 14. 12); their blood was shed freely, so that they were, when required, faithful unto death (16. 6; 17. 6; 18. 2-4); and thus practising righteous acts they wove a white robe in which they shall array themselves as the bride of the Lamb (19. 8).

(c) " Those fearing Thy name." Such a class, as distinct from the out-and-out avowed Christian, is known to the NT. Cornelius is so termed before his baptism into Christ; and Peter's words, " in every nation he that feareth God," imply that there are other such (Ac 10. 2, 35). In NT times many Gentiles had learned to fear the God of Israel and attended at the synagogues (Ac 13. 16, 26). In the End Times an angel will call upon all men to fear the Creator (14. 7). The " sheep " of the Lord's parable (Mt 25. 31-46) had not espoused *Him*, but had shown in practice that they feared the God of Christ's distressed brethren. There are to be such as will be guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb, though belonging not to the Bride (19. 9), to which status the " virgins " of the Lord's parable of the End Days correspond (Mt 25. 1-13 : comp. Ps 45. 12-15).

In these three classes there are " small and great," inconspicuous members and more prominent persons; but all such will be of those rewarded, though rewards will vary with service

(I Cr 3. 8), and one star will differ from another star in glory (I Cr 15. 41). Let each of us search his heart and test his ways, and consider whether he does in reality belong to one or other of these companies.

(vii) "And to destroy them that destroy the earth." The fulfilment of this is shown at 19. 11-21, the destruction of the Beast, the False Prophet, the kings of the earth, and their armies.

This brief summary of the End Time, from its beginning to its end, is of the utmost value for understanding the whole program of God and the scheme of the *Revelation*.

But it was announced that "the third Woe cometh quickly," yet nothing has been said concerning it. This defect will now be supplied. The program has been unfolded as far as to the destroyers of the earth being themselves destroyed. How this will be effected will be shown in cs. 15 and 16, which are an expansion of ver. 9 of this c. 11. This shows that cs. 12-14 are a parenthesis. This interposed series of visions we must now study. They are utterly crucial to the whole book.

Note 1, to p. 181, on "about to sound."

It should be noted that the verb used by the angel ($\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omega$ *teleo*, finished, completed) is the root of the compound found in the question of the apostles as given by Mk, $\sigmaυντελέω$ *sunteleo*, which may be rendered completely completed, accomplished. And that *mello* itself does not imply immediacy of fulfilment may be seen at Ac 11. 28, where in the present infinitive it is followed by a future infinitive, "a great famine was $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omega\epsilon\iota\omega\theta\omega\iota$ *mellein esesthai*, about to be." Here the words foretold an event which, as it proved, was not to be for three or perhaps four years.

But it may be said: Granted that it must be so as regards the whole mystery of God, yet as regards the part therein of the church does not I Cr 15. 52 declare that the completion of the church, by resurrection and rapture, will take place "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," and is not that instantaneous, at a mere point of time? This is true; but it does not say that this momentary event is to take place at the very moment that the last trumpet first gives a blast. This is indeed the natural inference from the next clause, that the event will happen "at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, etc." Here we find another of the many instances which should rebuke the desire that, for the sake of pleasing English,

God's Word should be translated loosely, not exactly. Let the passage be rendered strictly and it will read "*in* the last trump ; for it shall trump" (*ἐν τῷ ἐσχάτῳ σάλπιγγι . . . σαλπίσει γάρ en tē eschate salpingi . . . salpisei gar*). The difference between *at* and *in* is the difference between *at that moment* and *during that period*. As regards *ἐν* *en* with the dative of the noun, when referring to time, Liddell and Scott give the force as "within, while, during the time that"; and the VGT 210 shows that this was the usage in common speech also, by saying, "The temporal use of (*en*) to denote the period within which anything is done is naturally very common," i.e., in the papyri and inscriptions. It is extremely common in the NT. It were a long task to examine the whole Book, but in 95 instances of this construction noticed in the first three Gospels only one does not denote some period of time; as, "in the days of Herod," "in those days," "in that hour," "in that season," "in the time of harvest," and so on. The one exception noticed (Lk 4. 5) is an exception because of a specific word added, "in a *moment* of time": without the word "moment" the exception would not arise.

What therefore I Cr 15. 52 states is, that at some point of time during the period of the last trumpet that instantaneous event will occur; but it does *not* say that that moment of time will coincide with the moment the angel begins to blow. The failure to recognize this has caused much difficulty.

The NT use of *ἐν en* with the dative, as connected with things future, is in harmony with the foregoing, as these places will show.

Mt 19. 28: "*in the regeneration* (*ἐν τῷ παλινγενεσίᾳ*) when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." This work of judging cannot but imply a period.

I Cr 15. 23: "all shall be made alive . . . they that are of Christ *in His parousia*" (*ἐν τῷ παροντίᾳ αὐτοῦ*). The sense in which Paul used the phrase can be seen by his usage of it elsewhere, as

I Th 2. 19: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus, *in His parousia*?" It was not only at the first instant of the parousia that Paul would rejoice in his converts, but permanently in the presence of the Lord.

I Th 3. 13: "to the end that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father *in the parousia* of our Lord Jesus with all His saints." It is not merely at the first instant of rapture that this unblamable condition will be important. It is to be a continuous condition before God.

Ph 2. 12 : " as ye have always obeyed, not as *in my presence* (parousia) only, but now much more in my absence." Here the notion of duration, of a period, is plain.

It is thus that John also uses the phrase : " abide in Him . . . that we may not be ashamed from Him *in His parousia*" (I Jn 2. 28).

It is, of course, strongly denied by many that Paul's " last trump " is the same as John's last trump. In this case Paul must have known of one last trump and John of another last trump, and the Bible must speak of two things each of which is last. An esteemed correspondent writes as follows :

In the current number of *World Digest*, No. 54 (Oct., 1943), p. 24, this quotation occurs under the caption "The Things They Say."

'When the Last Trump sounds, in England a Royal Commission will be set up to decide whether it is really the Last Trump or the Last Trump but one. Anon.'

In thus satirizing English political procedure, the unknown satirist probably did not know that his words had a relevant theological bearing, since many hold that after the *Last Trump* of I Cr 15 the *Trumpet* of Mt 24 is to sound.

The latent supposition must be avoided that things shown in the *Revelation* were not revealed before. Some important things were known before, as for example : (1) Daniel was shown that there are personages of royal rank associated with the Ancient of Days in the government of heaven and earth : " I beheld till thrones were placed " (Dn 7. 9). Paul knew of those thrones as at the summit of the invisible creation : " thrones, dominions, principalities, authorities " (Cl 1. 16). John shows us these rulers in the twenty-four elders. (2) Abraham knew of the " city that hath the foundations " (Hb 11. 10) ; Paul calls it " the Jerusalem that is above " (Gl 4. 26) ; John gives the full vision of it. (3) Isaiah foretold a great trumpet as the signal for the gathering of the outcasts of Israel, to be blown in the day that Jehovah should come forth out of His place (Is 26. 20, 21 ; 27. 13). The Lord Jesus said that it is He who shall cause that trumpet to be sounded at His advent (Mt 24. 31). Paul adds that the dead and the living saints shall be raised or changed in connection with the coming of the Lord, and that the trumpet that shall then sound will be the last trump (I Cr 15. 52 : I Th 4. 16, 17), and he identifies it with the preceding mentions of the trumpet, by calling it " the trumpet of God," that trumpet before in Scripture associated with the descent of God to this earth. By so naming it as the trump

of God he seems to forbid in advance the imported idea that he had in mind the trumpet signals of Roman camps. And by calling it the last trump he intimates that it would be one of a series of trumpets ; which series John gives as numbering seven ; and the angel announces that it will be under the last of these that the mystery of God will be completed. It spoils the perfect sequence of truth revealed in connection with the trump of the Lord, to say that a most important item of the mystery of God had been completed some several years at least before this last trump known to Scripture. And the idea seems quite unnecessary save to support one particular scheme of prophetic interpretation.

Even without the other passages cited above, the sense of a period of time seems clearly involved in the whole statement of the angel. He did not say : "When the 7th angel shall sound, then immediately the mystery of God shall be finished" ; but "in the *days* of the voice of the 7th angel, etc." The plural "in the days" means of necessity during a period, not at an instant ; and the singular number accompanying "in the days of the *voice*" further intimates that the trumpet sound is regarded as continuing throughout that period.

Finally, the phrase in I Cr 15. 52, translated literally "it shall trump," is to be noticed. It is much less specific than the loose rendering "the trumpet shall sound," which latter aids the misconception that it is at the first sound of the trumpet that the events in question will occur. It is important to remember that trumpeting was not always a matter of one short blast and no more. Concerning Sinai we read (Ex 19. 19) that "the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder." The LXX emphasizes the prolonged nature of the sound by translating "the sounds of the trumpet were waxing louder and louder." Of Jericho it tells twice that "the priests . . . went on continually . . . blowing the trumpets as they went," and that it was at the sound of "a long blast" that the people were to shout (Jh 6. 13, 5).

From the foregoing as a whole we may conclude that each of these seven angels is to be understood as continuing to blow during the period of his judgment, and that it is during the period of the seventh trumpet that the mystery of God will reach its completion. Then shall the universe see what faith knows as yet only in part, and what angels desire to investigate, even "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God," that His judgments are indeed unsearchable "and His ways past tracing out," and then "to Him shall be the glory for ever. Amen." (Rm 11. 33-36).

Note 2, on the literal fulfilment of the plagues.

The believer is not unduly concerned as to what "science" may say upon the interpretation of the Word of God, but if any are interested to see how a modern scientist conceives that the physical disturbances described in these judgments could be brought about they may read an interesting paper by R. E. D. Clark, M.A., Ph.D., entitled "Apocalyptic Portents in the Light of Modern Science." It is in *The Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, vol. lxxiv, 1942, p. 17.



See p. 172.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WOMAN AND THE MAN-CHILD

(C. 12)

The seventh trumpet carries forward the drama to the completion of the mystery of God, in the rewarding of the godly and the destroying of the destroyers of the earth. This destruction is effected by the seven bowls, which finish the wrath of God (15. 1) and conclude the Time of the End.

Chapter 12 turns back to the commencement of the End Days ; for Satan is still acting in the heavens, the Beast has not yet been brought on the scene, his reign and persecution are still future.

The persons involved in c. 12 are (1) the Woman, (2) the Man-child, (3) his brethren, the rest of the woman's seed, (4) the Dragon and his angels, (5) Michael and his angels.

I. THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON.

It is simply crucial to the right interpretation that, at the time of the opening stage of this drama, the Woman and the Dragon have in common this striking feature, that each is at once in heaven and on earth. The Woman is in heaven arrayed with the glories of heaven, yet is on earth in travail ; the Dragon too is in heaven, drawing the stars of heaven after him, yet is he on earth waiting to devour the Man-child about to be born. This twofold sphere of each settles important questions.

1. *The time for the events.* When Paul wrote to the Ephesians Satan's hosts were still in the heavenly places (Eph 6. 12). This was nearly thirty years after the ascension of Christ. Thirty years later still, John saw this vision, and the casting of Satan from heaven was still future. But this casting out of Satan was a direct sequence to the Man-child having been caught up to the throne of God. Yet it did not follow the ascension of the Lord by at least the sixty years aforenoted ; and, as matter of present experience, every spiritual believer knows that Satan even yet operates in heaven, for he encounters him there in prayer-conflict whenever he presses the fight of faith so far.

2. From this it follows that the ascension of Christ was *not* the rapture of the Man-child. Other considerations emphasize this.

(i) The intervention of Michael to eject Satan from heaven, with the resulting persecution of the saints and turmoil in the world, refer plainly to Dn 12. 1, 2 : "At that time shall Michael stand up . . . and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was" before. But the angel added that that would be the time for the deliverance of the godly remnant of Israel and of a resurrection of the godly. Thus the whole scene belongs to the close of this age, not to its commencement.

(ii) It is conclusive that at c. 4. 1 it was said distinctly to John that he was then to be shown "things which must come to pass hereafter." How, then, could he have applied any vision that followed to events which had already taken place some sixty years before, when he was a young man ? Nor, in fact, does any scene in the book from that point onward go back prior to the time when John saw the visions.

(iii) The details of the Man-child were not accomplished in Christ, for (a) He was not at His birth caught up to God and to His throne ; and (b) He did not escape the fury of Satan, but, on the contrary, was slain by him in manhood.

II. THE WOMAN.

(i) There must be some consistency in interpreting symbols. If the Man-child be an individual, Jesus, so must be his mother, and the woman will be Mary. But the Woman's escape into the wilderness on the wings of an eagle, her being hidden and nourished there for 1260 days, and the brethren of the Man-child being persecuted by the Dragon, had no counterpart in the experiences of the Lord's mother and brothers. Nor was Mary in heaven and on earth at once.

Others make the child to be Christ, and His mother Israel ; but neither has that nation had the aforesaid flight, escape, and support in a wilderness, certainly not consequent upon the ascension of the Lord. Moreover, Israel as a people has not a position in heaven. No earthly *nation* has a standing there. Nations are of the earth, Israel with the rest. Her national calling, promises, and glory are for this earth.

Conversely, as the Woman is a corporate thing, so will the Man-child be a company of persons, not an individual.

There is only one system shown in Scripture that is at once heavenly and earthly, even the church of God. In the purpose and view of God its members are already seated in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph 2. 6), yet are they on earth in temptation, affliction, conflict. As Peter says, they "rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified" (RV mgn.), yet "for a little while have been put to

grief in manifold trials" (I Pt 1. 6, 8). The past tense "glorified" is to be noted. In the divine purpose this is already seen as accomplished, the Woman is in heaven. The Lord has already given to His disciples the glory the Father had given to Him (Jn 17. 22). All the glories of the heavens, sun, moon, and stars, are theirs, as God already views them in Christ (comp. Rm 8. 30), and, under bitter trial, they are granted a real foretaste of that joy and glory. Remember the face of Stephen.

In Joseph's dream of earthly things (Gn 37. 9, 10), the sun stood for his father, the moon for his mother, the stars for his brothers, and all were to contribute to his glory. So in the heavenly realm the church will have the glory of God (Rv 21. 11), the glory of the Jerusalem which is above, "which is our mother" (Gl 4. 26), and the glory of the firstborn (Hb 12. 23) among the whole vast family of God, in all its branches, Israel, the saved of the nations, and angels, even as it is written in Eph 3. 14, 15: "The Father from whom every fatherhood, in heaven (angelic) and on earth (human), is named." That in Joseph's dream there were eleven stars, but in John's vision twelve, is not a material difference. In the former case the number eleven was unavoidable, for Joseph had only eleven brothers. This inevitable variation does not nullify the general comparison.

(2) *The Woman in Travail.* When John first sees the woman she is in travail. Attention to the nature of this figure forbids every attempt to apply it to the far past or to spread it over the long centuries of this christian age. A woman may have more or less trouble all the period that she carries the child, or she may have little or none. But even the severest of such trials is not *travail*; for the latter is the birth-pangs, the short, sharp spasms that close the longer period and bring to birth. As shown above (I. 2. i), it is the actual end of the period of the church on earth that is here indicated.

This brevity connected with travail is emphasized in I Th 5. 3, there in connection with the sorrows of the world as here of the church, but during the same epoch-period: "*sudden* destruction . . . as travail upon a woman with child." Nor is the use of the figure in Rm 8. 22 (the only other passage: here $\sigma\upsilon\upsilon\omega\delta\iota\nu\omega$) really different: "the whole creation groaneth and travailleth . . . waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God," as a travailing mother waits for the appearing of her child. This mighty event, the manifestation of the *sons* of God in heavenly and royal majesty, has, in the purposes of God, been the goal of creation from its very commencement, and indeed earlier; for He is "bringing many *sons* unto *glory*" (Hb 2. 10), according to

a purpose "fore-ordained before the ages" of time (I Cr 2. 7). Now in comparison with the unmeasured stretch of the ages of creation the present period of groaning under the burden of sin is regarded as brief, a "travail" that shall issue shortly in joy and glory. It is an illuminating and consoling view of creation and its misery from the view-point of the Eternal. By a similar usage Christ calls this present age in particular an "hour" (Jn 4. 23) and John a "last hour" (I Jn 2. 18). It is as closing the vastly extended ages of time that two thousand years is thus brief. Similarly, Paul speaks of the sufferings of half a lifetime as a "moment" in contrast to eternity. Such comparisons are not loose but just. They confirm that "travail" is to be taken strictly, the brief end to a long period.

Surely John, seeing the condition of this woman, and using the word *travail* to describe it, must have thought upon what he heard the Lord say on Olivet as to this age (Mt 24. 6-14). Impressing upon them that the end was not then near, Christ went on to tell what events would notify its approach, namely, international wars, in conjunction with famines and earthquakes; and then he added "all these things are the beginning of *travail*."

Travail for whom? He explains: "Then shall they deliver *you* up unto tribulation, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all the nations for My name's sake . . . But he that endureth unto the end, this one (*οὗτος*) shall be saved." "Endureth *unto* the end" (*εἰς τέλος*), not *through* the End-time; and so the Lord added that there shall be universal hatred coupled with universal proclamation of the gospel, and "then shall the end (*τὸ τέλος*) come," of which End-time particulars are next given. Does this not suggest that some are to endure under tribulation as far as to the start of the End-time and then to be saved, the manner of that salvation not being there indicated, and that there-upon the End-time will commence?

Luke's report of this instruction is even more explicit. After the mention of wars, famines, pestilences, and signs from heaven, Christ said, "But *before* ALL these things they shall lay their hands on you and shall persecute you . . . and ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake" (Lk 21. 10-19). It may be noted in passing, that so long as certain chief powers remain avowedly upholders of the christian faith, protectors of liberty of religion, and some of their chief leaders being plainly themselves real believers in Christ, the time of this universal hatred of His name has not yet arrived, and that therefore wars which are to *follow* that universal persecution of His followers have not yet com-

menced. The statement of Luke which is before us has been very inadequately considered.

Inevitably such ill-treatment of the followers of Christ will draw public attention to the ill-treated and their message, and will of itself occasion that making known of the gospel to all nations before foretold : " it shall turn unto you for a testimony." This persecution may be instigated by the indignation of the then anti-christian peoples that faithful followers of Christ will refuse to join in their national ambitions and international schemes.

III. THE MAN-CHILD.

(1) It thus appears that, as the End-time approaches, the church of God as a whole will experience a sharp persecution ; she will be in travail. The effect of this upon disciples will, as always, be twofold. The many who have had some love for the Lord will grow cold toward Him, even as He said of that period, " Because iniquity shall abound, the love of the many shall wax cold." Yet, on the other hand, there will be exceptions, indicated by the adversative " but " of the next sentence : " But he that endureth unto the end, *this one* (*οὗτος*) shall be saved " (Mt 24. 12, 13). In this closing fight of faith some will fail, some will triumph ; there will be the conquered and the conquerors, the defeated and the overcomers. It is these latter who will together form the Man-child, itself a figure of vigour and authority, since according to God, authority belongs to the male, not the female. Merely as indicating the dignity that at that time attached to the term in the minds of men, but not endorsing the theology of their use, it is of interest that the ancient Egyptians spoke of their principal god Ra, as " the beautiful and beloved and divine Man-child " (*The Book of the Dead*, Trans. Budge, 7, 10).

(2) The identity of this child is settled by the law of former reference. He is " to rule all the nations with a rod of iron " (5). This is repeated from the promise to the overcomers in the letter to Thyatira (2. 26) : " The one overcoming [and who may die in the battle] and the one keeping my works until [living as far as unto] the end (*ἄχρι τέλους*),¹ I will give to *him* authority over the nations : and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers : as I also have received of my Father " (see Ps 2. 9). This promise is given only to the Son of God and to the overcomer. As it cannot in Rv 12 apply to Christ, it can only apply to the overcomers of His church. Conquering demands conflict ; birth is through travail ; the

¹ The repetition of the article (*ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν*) shows that two classes are in view.

general pangs of the church as the end of her period on earth nears will bring to birth the Man-child, the conquerors in the battles of that crisis epoch.

“ They climbed the steep ascent of heaven
 Through peril, toil, and pain :
 O God, to us may grace be given
 To follow in their train.”

(3) What constitutes victory or defeat is shown in the seven Letters.

Saints in Ephesus had suffered defeat in heart ; they had left their first love. Those in Smyrna, on the contrary, had sustained tribulation, poverty, reproach, maintaining their confession. They would triumph if they so continued, fearless and faithful even unto death. In Pergamum they were being defeated by compromise with the world’s religion and low morals, as Israel of old with Midian (Nm 25. 1, 2 ; 31. 16). As the end days approach, pagan idolatries will re-extend their sway over many lands (Rv 9. 20, 21), as well as in the Harlot Church (17. 4,5), and apostate Israel (Is. 2. 18-21 : Zp 1. 1-6 : etc.). Lenin worship in modern Russia, and the avowed return to Nordic gods by leaders of Nazi Germany, are solemn symptoms of a general reversion to open idolatry. Disciples in Thyatira had advanced to easy tolerance of this moral evil and compromise with idolatry ; open resistance in the church had ceased ; only some were ignorant of the deep things of Satan. Sardis showed the outcome—a merely nominal christian life, and the many with defiled garments. Philadelphian saints had taken to heart the warnings of Scripture, and were maintaining the fight of faith, though in feebleness. Laodicea had developed to the full the laxity that ever follows the loss of love, and had been defeated by self-satisfaction, wealth, lukewarmness. It troubled them not that the Lord was not in their midst.

The serious student of the will of Christ can here test his own state of heart, can see the danger-points in the battle, and against what wiles of the devil he must contend resolutely, if he means to be a conqueror. Personal attachment to Christ is the secret of all attainment and victory (I Cr 13). Compromise with the world’s religion is defeat (I Cr 8-11). Low moral conduct forfeits the birthright (I Cr 6. 1-11 : Hb 12. 14). The lukewarm are nauseous to Him who was eaten up by zeal for God’s house, and He rejects such from His presence. Self-sufficiency assures poverty of soul, together with nakedness of character, with its reproach and blindness.

How shall a starved, naked, and blind disciple defeat Satan, the strong one fully armed ? It is impossible. His very condition shows that he has been already robbed, stripped, and blinded, overwhelmed in the battle. Yet as Samson, long defeated, triumphed in his death, so may the defeated Laodicean, by great grace, snatch victory at last, if he will give again full heed to his Lord.

Human opinion as to what constitutes overcoming must be disregarded ; for one may flatter and deceive himself that he is victor (" thou sayest, I am rich," 3. 17), while another, who *feels* hopeless as to the battle, may be doggedly facing the foe. What heaven regards as overcoming, this twelfth chapter states plainly (vs. 10, 11). When Satan has been driven from heaven a great voice exclaims exultingly : " the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony ; and they loved not their life even unto death."

This activity of Satan as the prosecutor general of the earth goes back to early times. He accused Job, slanderously (Jb 1 and 2) ; but through pain and loss and manifold conflicts, by accepting the humiliation of self in the presence of God, and finally by interceding for the pardon of men who had maligned him to his face, Job became at last more than conqueror. He was vindicated ; not indeed at the bar of his own self-opinion—there he stood willingly self-condemned ; but before God, angels, and men ; while Satan as the accuser, tempter, tormentor, was defeated. Thus did Job, often faulty in judgment, failing often in temper and speech, yet endure unto the end of the battle, and was the overcomer, not the defeated.

This has been repeated and repeated in countless saints the ages through. " They overcame Satan (1) by means of the blood of the Lamb, and (2) by means of the word of their testimony : and they loved not their life even unto the death."

(1) Job based his security before God upon the blood of atonement. He offered sacrifices continually to maintain his household in the favour of God (1. 5). It was on the same ground he prayed for his friends (42. 8, 9). In John's vision the believers resisted the accusations of Satan by pleading that the blood of the Lamb had answered for and cancelled all the sins and failures the Accuser could cite against them. Thus they defeated his attacks before the throne of God.

Oh, that this dread situation were more understood as an actual present fact. God is the present judge of His people (I Cr 11.

31, 32 : I Th 4. 6 : Hb 10. 30, 31). In that Supreme Court Satan is the accuser, and fearful is the folly when the disciple by wilful or careless sin gives him ground of just accusation. He then demands (*ἐκατέω*) that such be given into his hands to be sifted as wheat (Lk 22. 31, 32). It is a law term that the Lord used, meaning to demand the surrender of an offender. The sifting will, indeed, only free the wheat from the chaff ; Job was sanctified by the Satan-inflicted trials, an upright man was made a holy man ; but how severe was the process !

Nor does the intercession of the Advocate defeat the Accuser further than to limit the degree of temptation. The Lord did not ask that Peter be not attacked that night, but only that his faith, which would totter alarmingly, might not collapse utterly. And it did not ; but Peter carried to the end the bitter memories of that fearful night, though restored and humbled by the tenderness of the Saviour ; he recovered faith and fidelity, and afterward overcame in the point where he had been defeated.

Were these actualities always before our heart how careful would be our walk, how would we watch and pray lest we should enter into any temptation of the Devil and afford him matter of accusation. Also, how utterly would we rest upon the precious blood of Christ for daily security from the Accuser. With what heart-felt meaning would then be invested the well-known lines :

“ What though the accuser roar
Of ills that I have done ;
I know them well, and thousands more :
Jehovah findeth none ” ;

and how thankfully would we sing :

“ When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look, and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.

“ Because the sinless Saviour died,
My sinful soul is counted free ;
For God, the just, is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.”

(2) But Job must sustain and win the fight on earth, in actual and painful experience, not only before God on high. Certainly it must be won first in the latter sphere or it cannot be in the former ; but if the case be won in the court victory can be secured in the practical contest. The verdict can be enforced against the adversary.

This word that Peter uses (I Pt 5. 5) : “ Your adversary the

devil," is another legal term (*ἀντίδικος*), and means an adversary at law. Thus the widow applied to the judge for an order against her adversary (Lk 18. 3; and note the same sense in its only other New Testament occurrences, Lk 12. 58, and Mt 5. 25 twice).

But, as Peter says, this adversary before God is also a "roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour." No doubt her adversary was devouring the widow's livelihood; perhaps one of those sharks the Lord rebuked, "the scribes who devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers" (Mk 12. 38-40). Commonly in the East a widow is the helpless prey of any villain who can wrong her. Thus was Job fearfully harassed in family, property, and person.

The believer who would be an overcomer must defeat Satan as the roaring lion as well as the accuser. It is a dire conflict, a fight to the death, nor can there be discharge in this war save by death or *defeat*. The overcomer must die in the battle. He must die daily to the self-life in all its indulgences, by living daily unto Christ and for others. It is in the multiplied repetition of tiny acts, which put another before self, that much of the battle must be fought daily; and he who loses here, by putting self-pleasing first, is being continually defeated.

"The common round, the trivial task,
Afford us all we ought to ask;
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To lead us daily nearer God."

But the focal point of the wars of the Lord is this: that He has charged His followers to confess Him before men, to speak to men of Him, in order that others may be delivered by the truth from the thraldom of the Devil (II Tm 2. 24-26). To silence our testimony is therefore vital to the maintaining of Satan's kingdom on earth, and to stifle our voices as witnesses for Christ is his main objective. The Christian who does not talk of Christ is a defeated man, while to bear witness unto Christ, His person, atonement, rights, is to conquer in the battle. The overcomer does this, though it cost him literally his life: "they loved not their life *even unto death*."

Tens of thousands have fought the fight even to this extremity. Imperfect in character indeed, faulty in practice indeed, they yet stood for Christ against all opposition and died rather than deny Him. This was victory. They held fast His name, and did not deny His faith, though one of their number (Antipas) had just been devoured by the roaring lion (2. 13), and they in turn stood

close to the bloody, gaping jaws, and each might be the next victim. This was victory.

“ Must *I* be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas ? ”

It does not require *much* introspection to be an overcomer : a little suffices. It is simple to determine whether I love my neighbour more than myself or myself more than my neighbour : it is simple to say whether I do or do not talk of the Lord Jesus as opportunity offers.

Dr. Torrey used to tell of a Jewess who came to know Jesus as Saviour and Lord. *Full* of the wondrous and new Object of her heart she talked freely of Him in her factory. Some finding this annoying, complaint was made to the management. A director said to her, We are told you have become religious. Well, that's your affair, but you really must not make yourself a nuisance to the others. She answered at once : If that means, sir, that I must not talk here about the Lord Jesus, give me my money, and I'll find work somewhere else. I am not going to work where I cannot talk about my blessed Saviour. They put up with her ; she confirmed her testimony by character and work, and in due time was made a forewoman. But in intention and readiness she had sacrificed her livelihood for her witness.

A business friend was being defrauded by two customers. His lawyer strongly advised an action, as he would certainly get judgment. But he had often talked with those men concerning Christ, and rather than forfeit his right to exhort them further, as he would have done by setting the law in motion, he forfeited a not small sum of money.

These are instances of conquering in the more usual battles with Satan. They who so overcome will find grace to lay down life itself for Christ, if called to this.

And many more will be called to this before the campaign is finished, by the King taking the field again in person ; for the Man-child is born out of the travail of the church as the age nears its end. Yet he is not the martyrs of those or earlier times. They will rise in resurrection and also will reign with Christ (20. 4). But he is a company of overcomers living at the hour in question, and who do not die but are caught away alive to the throne of God.

Connected with his removal there are points of determining force.

i. There is no hint here or elsewhere that a resurrection

accompanies this rapture of the Man-child. It is living saints only who are affected.

2. There is no suggestion that the Lord Jesus descends from heaven to remove this company. They are taken from the earth in fulfilment of the word of Christ, "That ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Lk 21. 36). "All these things" covers the whole of the time of the end, upon which the Lord had been enlarging, beginning with the international wars which will lead on to the supremacy of Antichrist. We have learned, however, from c. 6 that when Antichrist begins his career of conquest, the Lamb is still in heaven, opening the Seals and superintending those events, and that He continues in that station and work until the close of the Seals.

3. Hence, this Man-child is not taken to meet the Lord in the air, but far above to God the Father and to His throne. Thus this is not the event of I Th 4. 13-17 and I Cr 15. 51, 52, for the latter event is marked by features wanting here, the descent of the Lord to the clouds around this earth, the voice of the archangel, the sounding of the last trump, the raising of the dead who are to share the kingdom, the rapture of the living who are left over as far as to the parousia (*οἱ περιλειπόμενοι εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν*). The Man-child is not left so far as to that event, but is removed before Satan is cast out of heaven or the beast brought up to act on earth. As with Enoch, "he was not, for God took him" (Gn 5. 4), for "before his translation . . . he had been well-pleasing unto God" (Hb 11. 5).

4. This further thought is important. There is no suggestion that the Man-child represents *all* who will reign with Christ. The promise to do so belongs to all the overcomers of all the centuries, and those who will form the Man-child are not promised precedence over equally faithful disciples who had died before the End days. For example, one at least of the apostles (Ac 12. 2), and probably all, other than John, had died before ever these visions were given; yet the Lord had already promised to them thrones and sovereignty in His kingdom (Lk 22. 28-30).

The rapture of the Man-child is to secure these from the fires of the End-time which they will not need for their sanctification, having profited by the immediately preceding persecution, by enduring which they had "prevailed to escape" (Lk 21. 36).

This word "prevailed" (*κατισχύω*) is to be noted. In the best attested text it takes the place of being "counted worthy (*καταξιώ*) to escape" in the Textus Receptus. Its two other places in the New Testament show its strong force, as an intensive

form of the word for strength which implies vigour to master persons or situations.

Mt 16. 18. The gates of Hades shall not *prevail* to confine the godly when the moment has come when He who holds the keys of death and Hades calls forth His people thence to resurrection. Until that moment those gates bar the way to perfection and glory, but He who broke their power by His own resurrection will prevail over them again and will release His chosen.

Lk 23. 23. "They were urgent with loud voices asking [demanding] that he might be crucified. And their voices *prevailed*." They swept opposition before them and gained the day. It is such strong, resolute, determined effort that the Christian must maintain against the world, the flesh, and the devil if he is to be a conqueror. It is the violent who take the kingdom by force. And for this, faith finds all needed strength available in Christ. "Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus . . . suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (II Tm 2. 1-3).

Thus does the blood of the Lamb defeat Satan in heaven as the accuser, and patient, persistent, suffering testimony defeats him on earth as the roaring lion. At the moment in view he will be as a mighty, bloodthirsty (red) dragon, hungry to devour those who are the company who will supersede himself in the authority he is now to forfeit. But this his attempt will be frustrated by their sudden removal alive to the throne of God.

IV. THE CASTING DOWN OF SATAN.

Ek 28. 11-19 speaks of a king of Tyre in contrast to a prince of Tyre just before addressed (1-10). The latter is twice reminded that he is human, not divine, as he alleged: "yet thou art man . . . but thou art man" (2, 9): the former is as distinctly declared to be angelic: "Thou wast the anointed cherub that covereth, and I set thee so that thou wast upon the holy mountain of God: thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" (14). Both his nature and location were heavenly. As in the copy of the heavens, the tabernacle, the cherubim overshadowed the shekinah glory, and as in John's vision of that upper region the cherubim are similarly nearer to the throne than any other creatures (Rv 4. 6; 5. 6, 11), so in the earliest and still perfect state of the heavenly world this cherub was nearer to the person of the Most High than any other of His servants.

But pride and ambition corrupted him, violence and rebellion

ruined him (Ek 28. 15, 16) : no longer fit for nor tolerable in that pure realm he was cast out of that holy mountain of God (16 ; Lk 10. 18). To that highest height he has not since had access, but to the lower heaven, where is the administrative throne of God, he still has admission, and acts as the Accuser, as before seen.

Now the word of God through Ezekiel spoke of an hour when he who had already been destroyed from between the stones of fire should be driven yet lower in the universe : "I have cast thee *to the ground* : I have laid thee before kings" (17). In the visions of John the hour for this deeper degradation has now been reached, and the steps to it are given.

"There arose [burst forth, Charles] war in heaven." Why will translators avoid a literal rendering and thus hide important thoughts ? "There *was* war in heaven," say our Versions ; which at once starts such questions as, When ? how long previously to the vision ? how long had it lasted ? when did it end ? For aught that this "was" tells us it might have been untold millions of years before ; and so Milton took it, and most of his readers, misled by his brilliant lines, have so assumed.

On the contrary ; "there *arose* war in heaven" at the epoch of which John is writing, namely, when the Man-child had been caught away to the throne of God, and that was future to John's day and is future to ours.

This is clear from the fact that at this stage the dragon has seven heads and ten horns. Now when shortly thereafter he gives his kingdom to the beast, the latter has seven heads and ten horns (13. 1). This feature is repeated in 17. 3, 7, and then in ver. 12 John is expressly told that one of those seven heads was yet future, that the beast would be an eighth and one of the seven revived, and that the whole ten horns were still future and belonged to the time of the final world supremacy of the beast. The ten toes of Dn 2 show that this ten-kingdom stage is the actual close of the period of Gentile world rule, for it is then that the Stone falls ; and Dn 7 repeats that the ten-horned beast is in power when that world rule is transferred to the Son of Man.

That the dragon is Satan acting at the end of this age is further emphasized by the proclamation in heaven at his expulsion : "Now is come [*ἀρτι* just now, at this very time] the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Anointed ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down." This specific note of time is of much importance, as we have seen upon c. 11. 17, 18. Here it shows that the catching away of the Man-child and the casting down of Satan immediately precede

the assumption of the kingdom by God and Christ. In other words, these events are to take place just before, and as the preliminary to, the Son of man receiving world dominion as in c. 5. As there the first effect (Seal 1) was the sending forth of Antichrist, so here the direct result of Satan being cast to the earth is that he brings up the Beast and the End days arrive.

The rapture of the Man-child is therefore almost the earliest prophetic event specified in the Revelation, and the first to be expected after that general persecution of the church before noted. It will be the fulfilment of the words of Christ that they that watch and pray will prevail to escape all the things that will occur at the end of the age (Lk 21. 36).

The intervention of Michael and his angels will be the fulfilment of Dn 12. 1, 2: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince that standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." This again shows that the events of Rv 12 are to be directly before, and are to bring on, the great tribulation, the deliverance of the godly of Israel, the first resurrection, and the glory of the saints in the kingdom.

The fearful extent of Satan's fell influence in heaven is seen in the fact that the dragon's tail draws a third part of the stars of heaven and drags them to earth with himself. In ver. 7 the stars are plainly termed angels, showing the figurative sense of "star" to be a being of heaven. See Jb 38. 7: Is 14. 12: Nm 24. 17. No wonder that the heavens are not clean in the sight of God or that He putteth no trust in His holy ones (Jb 15. 15). Angels as well as men show that the creature can fall, having no inherent power to stand. Faith and obedience are as indispensable to their continuance and well-being as to ours. But how blessed that the cleansing virtue of the sacrifice of Christ will be extended to the heavenly things themselves (Hb 9. 23). Alas, that it is not said that it will extend to the heavenly *beings*, but to the heavenly *things* (*τὰ ἐποντάvia neuter*). Of these angels the Lord Jesus has solemnly said that it is for them the eternal fire is prepared (Mt 25. 41).

Satan's career to the time of this prophecy has been in two great stages: first, from his creation to his fall and expulsion

from the upper to the lower heavens ; then, to his expulsion from the lower heavens to the earth. A third, and short, stage will be till he shall be cast into the Abyss, to be imprisoned for the thousand years of the reign of Christ (Rv 20. 1-3). A fourth, and brief, stage will be when liberated he again deceives the nations (20. 7-9) : and the final, and endless, period will be when he is cast into the lake of fire (20. 10).

His names are awfully indicative of his character and activities. (1) The great red dragon, telling of his ferocity and love of destroying. "The thief cometh not save to steal and to kill and to destroy . . . the wolf snatcheth and scattereth" (Jn 10. 10, 12). (2) The ancient serpent : connecting the end of human history with the beginning, with Eden, and perhaps with still earlier times. (3) The Devil, the slanderer. (4) Satan, the adversary of all good persons and works. (5) The Deceiver, indicating his method of attack and conquest. "He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own : for he is a liar, and the father thereof" (Jn 8. 44). Thus was he the originator of murder and falsehood ; as is said of him truly in *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, he was "The beginning of death and the root of sin."

He is the deceiver of "the whole world." As the immediate context includes the heavenly regions as well as the earth, may it not be that here *hē oikoumenē* includes the heavens and means the whole habitable universe ? It seems to do so in Hb 1. 6 : "When He shall have brought in again the Firstborn into the *oikoumenē* He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." Here also the angels are viewed as connected with the *oikoumenē*. The properly universal value of this term is worth preserving against the resolute endeavour of some to restrict it when at all possible to its late use of the Roman Empire. It can cover any and every *habitable* region.

The state of Satan's kingdom, darkness and misery, is a consequence and an indication of his own moral state. Over such a fall, such a ruin, God, who delights in mercy, Himself laments, saying to Ezekiel, "Take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre" (Ek 28. 11, 12). It is truly a most lamentable spectacle, by no means one over which men, equally fallen, should speak lightly or reproachfully. Yet is it no wonder that heaven rejoices to be rid of him, or that earth may well mourn when his terrible and prostituted energies are at last concentrated upon its ruin. How blessed indeed are they who have been de-naturalized from being citizens in his doomed kingdom and naturalized into the kingdom

of the Son whom God supremely loves (Cl 1. 18). What a mighty transaction is the new birth.

V. THE FLIGHT OF THE WOMAN.

Light upon this compound figure of a woman and her family is to be gained from its use of Zion and Israel in Is 49. The theme of the chapter is the gathering of Israel by Messiah, as an outcome of His toils on earth that seemed at the time to have been in vain ; and thereafter the spread of blessing to the Gentiles unto the ends of the earth (vs. 1-7). The use of this passage by Paul (Ac 13. 36, 37) to justify before Christ-rejecting Jews the telling of the gospel to Gentiles, is simply an application in this age of the principle of a prophecy that awaits its fulfilment after the Lord Jesus shall have come again. Lamentably few as yet have been the kings and princes that see, arise, and worship (7). In this age few of such are chosen (I Cr 1. 26-31), but in the age of the kingdom of Messiah this shall be changed.

The journeys by which scattered Israel return to their land are described in vs. 8-13 (Is 49), and in 14 the prophecy continues :

But Zion said, Jehovah hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me . . .

(17) Thy children make haste ; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth from thee. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold ; all these gather themselves together and come to thee . . . (20) The children of thy bereavement shall yet say in thine ears, The place is too straight for me ; give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have been bereaved of my children, and am solitary, an exile, and wandering to and fro ? and who hath brought up these ? Behold, I was left alone ; these, where were they ?

This questioning is followed by the divine answer (22-26) :

Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I will lift up mine hand to the nations, and set up my ensign to the peoples ; and they shall bring thy sons in their bosom, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders . . . for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.

In the imagery of this exquisite passage Israel, viewed as a corporate entity continuing through the centuries, is a woman, a mother, long forsaken, exiled, wandering ; and the individual Jews of the time in view are her children that will gather from all quarters to their land and home. In one sense the woman at any given hour is the aggregate of her then existing children : but they are temporary, they die and another generation takes

their place ; whereas she is that corporate continuity which abides age-long.

It is the same usage as when Romanists may speak of that Church as their mother and themselves individually as her children. At any given point of time the children together compose the Church, yet does she transcend and survive them.

It must be noted, however, that, whereas the children are scattered, this corporate system is ever thought of as centred at a given spot. If speaking politically we ask, What will *Rome* say to this ? we mean the Italian people and particularly its central government. If speaking ecclesiastically the question is, What will the *Vatican* say ? we mean the Roman Catholic Church and especially its hierarchy. Thus in each of these three instances, Zion, the Italian people, and the Roman Catholic Church, figured as corporate entities, the system is identified with the place that is its headquarters.

This illuminates the figure as applied in Rv 12 to the heavenly church. Viewed collectively, as a system formed in the mind and counsel of God, she is a "woman" in heaven and in glory, a continuity through the centuries, already complete in the purpose of God, and being completed in actual experience on earth. And the individual saints of any given time are the children of this mother, but she includes them in all the centuries, and transcends and survives them as individuals. And at the Time of the End her then living children are in two branches : those forming the Man-child, who escape the End days, and the "rest of her seed" who pass through those days.

There is that in the earthly Israel which answers somewhat to this. Her children also are found in two sections : one brought to Jerusalem and the land before the Beast rules, for he oppresses them there (Zh 13. 8, 9), and they are delivered when the Lord descends to Olivet (Zh 14. 4 : Jl 2. 12-18) ; and there are the rest, gathered out of all lands after the Antichrist has been destroyed (Is 11. 10-12 ; etc.).

In the meaning of this figure Zion is the name of the whole people, but as seen in the representatives of the whole who will be already there at the time for that second regathering. These are the "mother" ; and she moreover had been "exiled, and wandering to and fro," long away from her original centre, Jerusalem.

There is that in the heavenly church which answers to this. By divine appointment her original centre on earth was also Jerusalem. By the Lord's express command it was there the apostles were to begin their witness (Lk 24. 47). Is it not striking that it is the one Gentile writer of the New Testament who

records this, and does so long after the gospel had spread widely among the Gentiles? To what purpose was a Gentile convert to be instructed that Jerusalem is God's centre whence the gospel radiated world-wide? Does it not suggest that in the thought of God Jerusalem abides His centre on earth, as much for the church as for Israel?

As long as Jerusalem stood it continued to be such a centre for the church. There the apostles had their headquarters (Ac 8. 1; 9. 27; 11. 1; 15. 2, 4, 6, 22). To them at Jerusalem a Gentile church referred a disputed question, and thence they issued their directions on the subject. And to them there even the apostle to the Gentiles was divinely directed to go up and set forth his teaching and work among Gentiles (Gl 2. 2).

With the destruction of the city, A.D. 70, the church, like Israel, lost that centre, and ever since has been wandering to and fro. But the thoughts of God are not changeable: with Him there "can be no variation, nor shadow that is cast by turning" from one course to another. For all purposes of the earth, whether for Israel, the nations, or the church, Zion is His centre, Jerusalem His holy city. It is clear from Scripture that this will be seen in the End days and the kingdom. And already the great world movements are bent toward the Middle East. Satan is moving back to his original centre, Babylon, and God to His centre, Jerusalem.

May we not therefore think that a Scripture so clearly belonging to that mighty epoch as does this twelfth chapter of the *Revelation* has this same divine view-point, and that the "Woman," the church, is to be thought of as represented by those of her company who will at that time be found at and around Jerusalem? This would follow exactly the case of the earthly Israel as given in Is 49 considered.

Yet it is evident that it is not the latter who can be pictured by the Woman escaping from the Dragon, for the Old Testament makes plain that Israel cannot escape that period, least of all at Jerusalem. It is pre-eminently the time of Jacob's trouble (Jr 30. 7), and the only way she shall be saved from it is by the Lord's personal intervention at its close.

Among the notable events of our day one is the establishment of so many Jews in the Holy Land, and another, less noticed, is the building up again there of the true church of God. After nearly nineteen centuries since Israel and the church were both driven thence, the conditions are being established which will make possible the fulfilment of prophecies both of the oppression of the Jews in the land and the flight of Christians from it.

For, if we mistake not, this flight of the woman will fulfil that counsel of Christ given on Olivet and recorded by the three evangelists (Mt 24. 15-21 : Mk 13. 14-20 : Lk 21. 20-24). The last mentioned passage reads as follows :

But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand. Then let them that are in Judæa flee unto the mountains ; and let them that are in the midst of her depart out ; and let not them that are in the country enter therein. For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days ! for there shall be great distress upon the land, and wrath unto this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

It will be asked if this flight did not take place in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was attacked by Titus ? This has been so generally maintained, and the point is so crucial to the right application of the whole Olivet discourse, that I give here at length what I wrote in *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel* (138-140), upon the destruction of Jerusalem by Antichrist.

It is to this dread time that Rv 11. 1, 2 points : " And there was given to me a reed like unto a rod : and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court that is without the temple cast without and measure it not ; for it was given unto [that is, into the power of] the nations : and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." The past tense " it was given " (*ἔδοθη*) is to be noted. It puts the handing of the city to the oppression of the nations into an indefinite past, and can refer back as far as to this prophecy in Daniel.

Now John was writing after A.D. 70, and therefore foretells some destruction of the city future to his day. Nor can this verb *to tread under foot* refer to any peaceable holding of the city, as Jerusalem was held by the Turks for centuries, or as now by the British. To the former as Moslems the city was most sacred, being the spot where Abraham offered up Ishmael (as they say), and there they built the great mosque that is still standing. To the latter the city is sacred in a christian sense, and they are labouring to extend and beautify it. But *to tread down* (*παταρέω*) means as a man stamps violently on a serpent (Lk 10. 9), or as grapes are crushed to pulp in the press (Rv 14. 20 ; 19. 15), both actions being fierce and destructive.

It was to *this* destruction of Jerusalem, not to A.D. 70, that the Lord pointed when speaking on Olivet of the End times and of His coming glory. He first warned the apostles that the End was not

to be soon : " the end is not immediately " (Lk 21, 9). Having thus carried their minds far forward He spoke of the international wars that would usher in the End, and of accompanying disturbances in earth and in heaven (10, 11). He mentioned also an universal persecution of His followers : " Ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake " (12-19). This is to take place *before* any other events He predicted (12). With this compare Rv 17, a picture of the End times, when the " Harlot " shall dominate the " beast," and will use the power to make herself drunken with the blood of the saints.

There is no ground to turn back at this point in the prophecy to A.D. 70. The Lord passes at once to that invasion of Palestine by Antichrist which had been before detailed by Isaiah (10. 28-32), to culminate at Zion in the horrors shown in Zh 13. 1, 2 above considered. He said : " When ye shall see Jerusalem being encompassed (*κυκλούμενην*) with armies . . . then . . . flee unto the mountains." This has been generally, but wrongly, applied to A.D. 70. It is said that the Christians then in Jerusalem acted upon this verse and fled from the city before Titus invested it, and went to Pella beyond the Jordan. That they did so flee is asserted by Eusebius, writing from tradition some two and half centuries later. It is not otherwise known. But even if they did flee, it is a mistake to say that they did so because of the Lord's words in question. Eusebius does not suggest this, but, quite to the contrary, says distinctly that they acted upon divine counsel given to certain godly men at the time (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book III, c. 5).

His words are : " The whole body, however, of the church at Jerusalem having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella." The " men of approved piety " were not the apostles, for he has just before stated that these had been already " driven from the land of Judaea " and " had gone forth to preach the gospel to all nations." It is the more plain that he does not say that this removal was an acting upon any word of Christ, that in c. 7 he himself applies the Lord's words in Lk 21 to A.D. 70, yet here he says that the Christians removed because of a revelation given " before the war," an expression most unnatural had he meant nearly forty years before.

But if the words of Christ are considered strictly they suffice of themselves to forbid application to A.D. 70. For He said : " These are days of vengeance, that *all* things that are *written* may be fulfilled " (22). Now (i) nothing specific as to A.D. 70 was written in the Old Testament ; and (ii) very many other things *are* written there which were *not* fulfilled in A.D. 70, but still remain to be fulfilled. Such passages as Is 10 and Zh 13 are among these.

There is, therefore, to be a flight of disciples of Christ from Judaea at the close of this age, when all that is written of that time is to be accomplished. This urgent flight is to be at an hour

defined precisely. The image of Antichrist has been set up in the holy place at Jerusalem and the armies of Antichrist are converging upon the city to enforce its worship, and to inflict that final and worst of all reigns of terror that the world, and even guilty Israel, has ever endured.

Now this is the exact time that the Woman flees from the face of the serpent. The Man-child has been caught up to God; the Dragon has been cast down from heaven, and his time of liberty is now short. It is exactly prior to that great tribulation of which the Lord spoke that His followers are to flee from Judaea and Jerusalem; it is just prior to the "time and times and half a time" of Antichrist's oppression of the Jews that the Woman flees, for it is during that same period that she is to be nourished in the wilderness. This triple designation of the period is taken from Dn 7. 25, where it describes the term of Antichrist's activity in wearing out the saints of the Most High.

The Lord spoke of fleeing to the mountains, not meaning the hills of Judaea, for it is from that land that disciples are to flee. These mountains must therefore be beyond that land. But their location is not named. Both east and south of Palestine lie vast deserts with hilly regions. Similarly John sees the Woman flee to the wilderness, but which is not specified.

Christ intimated the mighty influence of prayer by bidding believers pray that their flight be neither in the winter nor on a sabbath. So that prayer can affect the season of the year, and even the day of the week, when the onrush of Antichrist will make flight imperative.

It has been urged that it cannot be Christians that are here in view because, as is alleged, the law of the sabbath does not bind them. This may well be questioned seriously; but even if it be so it has not been weighed that they will be living in a Jewish state under Jewish law, so that a long journey on a sabbath will be illegal and will expose them to the restraints of law and to the opposition of fanatical Jews. That Jewish law will be in force during the first half of the seven years is reasonably to be inferred: for (1) the government is Jewish, for it has made a covenant with Antichrist; (2) the temple worship is in progress, which could only be regulated by the Mosaic laws; (3) Ml 4. 4 exhorts Israel to "remember the law of Moses" in view of "the great and terrible day of Jehovah."

Indeed, so formidable will be the natural difficulties of flight that supernatural aid will be afforded: "there was given to the Woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness" (ver. 14). The law of former mention refers this

back to "the fourth living creature, which was like a flying eagle" (4. 7). Against satanic, spirit opposition cherubic help is matched; and against material danger, the flood of water (that is, a military force, possibly a detachment of the army then attacking Palestine), material aid is given; an earthquake swallows up the pursuers.

VI. THE REST OF HER SEED.

Thwarted in his attempt to destroy the Man-child and baulked in his effort to overwhelm Christianity at its centre, Satan in great wrath turns to a detail persecution of the rest of the disciples of Christ wherever they are to be found: "he went away to make war with the rest of her seed." The details of this campaign occupy c. 13 and will be considered there. Here be it observed:

1. For this purpose he "went away," that is, from the region where he had attacked the Woman, implying, as is above suggested, that she is a limited (though representative) company, localized at a certain centre.

2. That these persons are plainly the brethren of the Man-child, already present, but not caught away from earth as he, nor residing in and fleeing from Judaea, as does their common "mother." He and they are one family.

3. They are not the Israelites still scattered in the countries, for they "keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus," which neither apostate nor pious Jews will be then doing. That some of them may have been Jews is possible; but then, as now, to avow Jesus will forfeit their Jewish standing, before God and men; they will thereby become Christians. At that era the vast majority of Jews will be apostate, and the "very small remnant" (Is 1. 9), though keeping the commandments of God, as far as the law of Moses goes (Ml 4. 4), will not have espoused Jesus, for this they will not do until they see Him come in glory for their deliverance from Antichrist (Zh 12. 10; 13. 6). A remnant of "Jewish" disciples owning Jesus as Lord, yet not of the church of God, is unknown to the Bible.

Moreover, "the commandments of God" is a wider term than the law of Moses, it covers New Testament commandments also. Again, John has before included himself with those to whom such a description applies. He says he was "in the isle that is called Patmos on account of (*δια*) the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." And in c. 14. 12, 13 we shall see the same double mark attached to "saints," "they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." At that time "saints" was the common title of members of the church of God; only such "kept

the faith of Jesus" (see 2. 13, "thou didst not deny My faith"); only Christians were said to die "in the Lord."

Thus (1) the "Woman" viewed as a corporate entity, localized in her representative members then in Palestine, will be preserved from extinction, though her lot in the wilderness will be severe, yet wondrous; (2) the Man-child will have been rapt to the throne of God before that flight; (3) the remainder of her scattered family will endure the persecution of the Beast, and will be thereby sanctified for their high calling in the kingdom of the Holy One then about to be set up on earth.

This c. 12 is a *crux interpretum* for the whole *Revelation* and the Times of the End, especially in relation to the people of God to be then living. Whatever scheme of interpretation of it is self-consistent, and also harmonious with the rest of the book, may be regarded as true. Such interpretation, however, must and will deal fairly and naturally with the figures of speech employed; must take account of the three sections of the one fellowship, the mother and the two branches of her family; and must allow that the one and smaller section is taken to heaven before the End days arrive and the Beast appears, while the other section is left to go through his era. It is here that the two principal schools of futurist expositors have both failed; the one insisting that all Christians must be taken from the earth before the time of the Beast, and the other by insisting that no saints can escape that period. Neither school has been able to deal accurately and fully with this chapter, nor, as we shall see, with its parallel passage c.14.

CHAPTER IX

THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET

(C. 13)

I. THE BEAST.

i. The seventh chapter of Daniel shows four beasts emerging from the Great Sea. In my treatise on that book reasons are given that this means the Mediterranean and that these four beasts are still all future. They reveal how the ten-kingdom stage of Gentile world-rule, that is, of the ten toes period of the image of c. 2, will be developed.

In c. 12 the Dragon has seven heads and ten horns, each *head* having a diadem. In the present chapter the Beast has ten horns and seven heads, each *horn* having a diadem. In 17 the Beast has seven heads and ten horns. The repetition of the same order, heads and horns, in the first and last instances suggests some closer correspondence between these two pictures; and the variation to horns and heads in the second case raises an enquiry as to the reason for the change of order. There is also the difference that it is the heads that bear diadems in the first instance and the horns in the second. In the third case the diadems are not mentioned because both heads and horns are stated plainly to mean kings, which in the two earlier visions was only intimated by them wearing the symbol of royalty, the diadem.

In 17 the Beast is the empire corporate, a creation from ancient times of the Dragon, which he permeates with his spirit and dominates. Comp. Eph 2. 2: "the prince of the authority of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience." The relation is, so to say, direct, the Dragon is embodied in the Beast, and the relation between them is so close that the same symbols and numbers of heads and horns are given to both. But in c. 13, as also in 17. 11-13, the Beast is personal, and is an outgrowth of the corporate, as a horn is of the animal. Thus he is not here viewed as at first so directly connected with the Dragon, but as it were meditately, through being head of the empire corporate. Later in his career he will be personally energized by the Dragon, for the latter gives to him his own universal authority (ver. 2). For the moment, however, it is his origin that is in view, as arising on the Beast corporate.

In Prelim. Dissertation 3 the feature of prophecy has been stressed that events of a prophet's time are linked immediately with events to come in the End Times. This illuminates the visions now before us. C. 17 shows that the Beast corporate and its seven heads belong to John's own period. See on that chapter. But the Beast personal and the ten horns are to come in the Last Days. Similarly, as shown in the last chapter, the Woman was already existing in John's day, as was the Dragon ; but the Man-child is to be born as the End Days arrive. Therefore, in the visions of the Dragon (c. 12) and of the Beast corporate (c. 17) the heads are mentioned first, as being first in time, and they carry the diadems as kings ; but in c. 13 the Beast personal is shown with seven heads simply to identify him with the same Beast as will afterward be detailed in c. 17, but it is the horns that are diademed because at the end of the age it is not the seven heads but the ten kings that will be present and rule as kings.

The fourth Beast is ten horned, signifying a confederacy of ten kingdoms. The horns are already present when the Beast emerges from the sea, indicating that the confederation had been formed before the hour intended by the arising out of the sea. After this emergence, that is, after the confederation has commenced its raging attacks on others, and has triumphed over them, an eleventh horn arises among the ten and gains supremacy over them all and then over all the earth. It is this eleventh and final sovereign that is depicted in Rv 13 as the Wild Beast, for it too has ten horns. That it is not itself the fourth Beast of Dn 7 is shown by its having also seven heads, which the fourth Beast had not. The meaning of the seven heads is given in Rv 17. 9-11, and will be considered in para. 4 below.

In our chapter the ten horns are already diademed, showing the exact stage in the career of the eleventh horn of Dn 7 to which Rv 13 points. For John was informed (17. 12) that in his day these ten horns were still future, and would "receive authority, with the Beast, for one hour." In c. 13, then, the earlier career of the eleventh horn, by which he rises to supremacy, and which may be of considerable length, is not noticed : the vision starts at the point when he and his ten subordinates are already ruling conjointly. His connection with and supremacy over all Mediterranean powers, is shown by the detail that not only has he the ten horns of the fourth beast, but combines in himself the leopard, the bear, and the lion, the symbols of the three beasts that had risen from the Great Sea before the fourth. This is important as intimating the wide and central area of his primary and immediate authority.

In Dn 7 the eleventh horn arises on the fourth beast *after* the latter has emerged from the Sea. Therefore when in Rv 13 the Beast is said to "come up out of the sea," it is not imperative to take *this* sea as meaning the Mediterranean, but it may be understood in the figurative meaning of a state of general international commotion; for it is during such a period that the eleventh horn arises, and its confusion and destruction he at first greatly aggravates. This is supported by the fact that in c. 17 the "waters" where sits the Woman upon the Beast are "peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues."

2. *On his seven heads are names of blasphemy.* This reveals his attitude to God and the truth. He is not indifferent to either; he is not tolerant of any and every religion; on the contrary, he definitely and openly *blasphemes* the true God. Of old, emperor worship occupied this relation to God, and His people were required to blaspheme God and Christ by worshipping the statue of the emperor. This will be the demand of the Beast, as we shall see shortly. It will be the repetition and fulfilment of the historic forecasts given in Dn, cs. 3, 5, 6, and of the prophecies given in Dn 7. 25; 8. 11, 12; 9. 27; 11. 31, 36.

His railings are directed also against God's "tabernacle, even those tabernacling in heaven." Persons collectively are termed God's tabernacle. See upon 21. 2, 3. Here (13. 6) possibly those who form the Man-child are meant, these being the only people of God as yet in the heavens.

3. *His energy is Satanic.* "The dragon gave him his power." See Dn 8. 24: "his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power," and Dn 11. 38, 39: "he shall honour the god of fortresses . . . a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour . . . he shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign God." He may himself arise in Armenia (see my *Daniel*, 231), which for fifteen centuries has been a nominally Christian land, in which case Satan will be indeed a foreign god, unknown as such in that land.

4. *In 17. 11 the seven heads* are explained as seven kings, of whom five had fallen when John saw the visions, one was then reigning, and the seventh was yet future. No hint was given as to how long before John's day the five had lived, nor how long it would be thereafter before the seventh would arise. This might have suggested more caution in the attempts to identify them. But an eighth would follow and would be the same person as the Beast of c. 13, because he, too, would be associated with the ten kings as their superior, and all should be ruling when the words of God should be accomplished, that is, when the Lamb should

triumph over them (17. 14). This eighth would be one of the former seven, and so in 13. 3 one of his heads had been smitten unto death, and this death-stroke was healed, that is, a man formerly slain by violence is brought again to life. That he had been a former Gentile monarch seems to forbid that he is a Jew. I know not a word of Scripture that suggests this last notion.

5. *The War with the Saints.* Being established as sovereign he now turns to the deadly task for which especially Satan has revived, exalted, and empowered him. In this war he is outwardly successful: he overcomes them, that is, suppresses and kills these saints. These are "the rest of the Woman's seed" (12. 17). Other scriptures show that the godly of Israel also are attacked. It is now that the Two Witnesses are killed in Jerusalem (11. 7). It is the time of the fulfilment of Mt 24. 21, 22: Lk 21. 34, 35: Rv. 3. 10: of Jr 30. 7: Dn 12. 1; etc.

Dn 7. 25 had defined the duration of this war as "a time and times and half a time." The Woman is nourished in the wilderness for a period described by the same term, but stated as being 1260 days (reckoning 30 days to a month); and then the period is given in months, forty and two months. By this use of alternate and equivalent terms, no ground is left for giving them any but their natural force, and they show precisely the meaning of "a time, times and half a time." For His elect's sake God has set a short limit to that appalling "hour." To the end of the age how greatly is the world indebted to the presence of saints, even while it evil entreats them.

In that fearful period there will be fulfilment of the inevitable law "with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you" (Mt 7. 2). He who drags others into captivity, or is willing to do so, shall himself become a captive; and he who kills by the sword, whether in battle or as executioner, shall be himself thus killed. God's saints will allow no bitterness of heart against their tormentors, but will patiently endure all, in the faith that God will ever support and will vindicate at last. Amidst the defiled and violent they will behave as *saints*. In them the Lamb shall defeat the dragon, even though crushed by him. It was thus at Calvary. The idea that the saints will fight the beast with carnal weapons does not arise from aught that is written.

6. *The Beast's Universal Authority.* The authority of the Beast at its brief height will be universal. This is emphasized here by the variety of the expressions used.

(i) "The dragon gave him his throne" (2). This throne dominates all mankind. Satan is "the prince of the world," as the Lord three times named him (Jn 12. 31; 14. 30; 16. 11); for "the

whole world lieth in the evil one (I Jn 5. 19). “ *All* this authority [of *all* the kingdoms of the world] . . . hath been delivered unto me ; and to whomsoever I will I [Satan] give it ” (Lk 4. 5, 6).

(ii) “ The *whole earth* wondered after the Beast ” (3).

(iii) “ Authority over *every* tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation ” (7).

(iv) “ *All* that dwell on the earth shall worship him ” (8), except the people of the Lamb.

(v) “ The *earth* and them that dwell therein worship the first Beast ” (12).

(vi) “ He causeth *all* (them that dwell on the earth), the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond ” to receive the mark of the Beast (16).

(vii) “ And that no man should be able to buy or to sell ” without that mark (17).

By terms collective and terms distributive being varied and intermingled the point is made certain. For a full discussion see my *Daniel*, App. A.

7. *The Worship of the Beast* is :

(i) Part of the worship of the Dragon who exalts him. As to the already avowed worship of Satan, see Pember (*Israel and the Gentiles*, 425 ff. ; *Great Prophecies*, ed. 1941, p. 153 seq.). But perhaps not all men could be brought easily to worship a spirit ; most crave an object more discernible, which desire will be satisfied in the Beast. He who honours the Son of God honours the Father who sent Him (Jn 5. 23) : he who worships the Beast worships the Dragon who empowers him. To be higher than the other angel princes, yea, to be like the Most High, and therefore to be worshipped, was Satan’s original sinful ambition (Is 14. 12-14). He has ever attracted heathen worship to himself through his demon servants (Dt 32. 16-18 : Ps 106. 37 : I Cr 10. 20). In pursuance of this craving he has incited human servants of his to demand worship, as in Dn 3 and 6, and later emperor worship. It was the bait spread vainly before Christ : “ If thou wilt worship before me it shall all be thine ” (Lk 4. 7), but which bait Antichrist will swallow to his ruin. “ He shall magnify himself above every god ” (Dn 11. 36) : “ He sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as god ” (II Th 2. 4) ; and in this place, “ all that dwell on the earth shall worship him ” (ver. 8).

It is probable that this deifying of the Emperor will have two phases, as of old. First he may be worshipped as the head and embodiment of the “ State,” the aspect in this chapter ; and later as himself personally divine, as in II Th 2. Let the Christian watch and pray against the present revival of “ State ” worship.

(ii) The agent of this worship is the other wild beast which comes up out of the earth (11), i.e., he comes to the fore in a time of public order. Having secured world dominance, the peoples being at rest and saying to one another, Peace and safety at last (I Th 5. 3), the Antichrist decrees an universal religion, following in this the first world-emperor (Dn 3), and others since. This religion is the worship of the Dragon and himself, and the second Beast is his Minister of Religion. This office in all times and places is an open denial of the sole rights of the Son of God as the Ruler of the house of God, as the one and only Mediator to interpose in the relations of man with his Maker. The godly should ignore such an official, as the three Hebrews ignored Nebuchadnezzar's herald proclaiming the royal orders as to the worship of the golden image (Dn 3). This second and subordinate Beast will have plenary powers in this realm of life : " he exerciseth all the authority of the first Beast in his sight " (12).

There has been too much curious speculation as to the identity of this servile minister of state. Especially has it been urged that Judas Iscariot is he. That most miserable of men is burdened with past guilt enough. It is not for us, without warrant, but by mere guess work, to put upon him this future guilt. But we are not told who the false Prophet is and cannot ascertain. That he, like his master, may be a resuscitated man is inferred from the fact, that, at the descent of Christ, he too is not slain but is cast direct into the lake of fire (Rv 19. 20). This could not be to him the second death if he had not died before.

The parody of the true by the false has been often pointed out. True worship is to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit ; the false is to the Dragon, through the Beast, by the false Prophet. Satan's kingdom is a perverted copy of the kingdom of God, which is a key to open many of its deep mysteries.

(iii) To support his blasphemous worship he does great signs, so as even to make fire to come down out of heaven. Satan did this when attacking Job (Jb 1. 16), so it can be repeated. And even as Israel was convinced that Elijah was the prophet of Jehovah when he called down fire on the altar, so will truth-rejecting men be deceived into worshipping the Beast. For the gospel having been proclaimed at that time universally, and rejected with violence, there will come a dread and complete fulfilment of Is 6. 10 : Mt 13. 14 : and II Th 2. 9-12 : " because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, God shall send them a working of error that they should believe the lie, that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." The last clause shows

that the cause of their unbelief is moral, not intellectual. There is no alternative between truth and falsehood.

(iv) The means of this worship will be an image of the Beast, the open worship of an idol, a visible representation of an absent person. And this image will be vivified, so as to speak. Let the sceptic cavil, if he will ; but let him beware lest, if he be then alive, he be one of the deceived. It will but repeat history if replicas and pictures of this image are multiplied for local civic use and home adoration. In one room alone in, alas, a christian home, I saw in 1938 no less than five different portraits of a certain continental Dictator. Let the little children of God guard themselves against this form of idolatry, against hero worship.

(v) The legal sanction that enforces this emperor-worship will, as of old, be death. And detection of nonconformists will be made easy and speedy. All men must eat ; but none shall be allowed to trade who do not show the mark of the Beast, and so it will be made impossible to obtain food or to transact any business. It is, however, then that the "sheep" of the Lord's parable will come to light (Mt 25. 31-40). Tacitus tells that the ferocious treatment of Christians by Nero caused public opinion to relent in their favour ; and though no such universal mercy will spring up in the coming time, yet will some be found who will risk the consequences of detection and succour the persecuted. It may be presumed that the edicts of the great Tyrant may be less severely enforced beyond the limits of his own original home territory, the area of the four beasts of Dn 7 ; and it is clear from the revolts that come at the end (Dn 11. 40, 44), that some regions become thoroughly disaffected, and in these the persecution may lapse and the persecuted be helped.

Enquiries to determine the number of the beast, the cryptic meaning of 666, have been endless and fruitless. When this needs to be known wisdom will be given to the spiritually intelligent, so that they may be sure that the person foretold is present. The moral lesson is of value : that 6 is the number of man, as 7 is of God ; that man developed to the full (666) cannot rise to the perfection of God ; that therefore Satan's promise to Eve, "Ye shall be as God," can never be fulfilled in unregenerate man. It has been suggested to me that the phrase "'it is the number of a man,' if it meant the number of some particular or great man, would probably have read *ἀριθμὸς γὰρ ἄνδρος ἐστί*, but in fact it is *ἀριθμὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ἐστί*, which may very reasonably be translated 'it is the number of man'" (H. L. E.).

This prophecy bears the common feature of prophecies, that it is linked with former utterances by few yet sufficient details,

which it combines, amplifies, and places in their exact and final setting. The direct purpose here is to show the Agent and the means for the last war of the dragon against Christians wherever found.

We of to-day should take serious note of the powerful centralizing motion of society all over the earth. More and more does authority pass to officials, and these become fewer, as to the number who dominate. General regulations increase in number and scope, designed at first to meet critical social conditions, as in a time of war. National registration, central food control, membership in some trade, or civic, or national organization, all work in the direction of that final and detail control of the masses above pictured. For all these schemes and economic measures, however well meant to-day in a democratic country, can be readily turned to a boycott of disciples of Christ as here foretold. In Russia it has already been so.

Therefore let the disciple brace his will to be utterly faithful to his Redeemer and Lord, learning from the Word what His will is, and above all refusing to be *yoked* with unbelievers in any form or degree of union (II Cr 6. 14-7. 1). We cannot go out of the world, and *contact* with unbelievers is unavoidable, and also some *co-operation* with them may be right. Believers and unbelievers in Christ work together in a factory to produce clothing; or on the land to grow food; or they may co-operate to help the sick or wounded. But a *yoke* is an arrangement which *compels* two creatures to act together, and prevents them separating. In such case the believer must go on with the unbeliever, however ungodly may be the path or act. This yoking is as plainly forbidden to the Christian as is adultery or murder.

Courage and strength are to be gained, and to be gained only, by maintained heart-fellowship with the Lamb, cultivated privately and persistently, in the communion of His Spirit, through obedience to His words and a stedfast waiting upon Him in secret prayer. Thus does love to Him burn, and love makes possible all service and suffering.

CHAPTER X

FIRSTFRUITS, HARVEST, VINTAGE

(C. 14)

I. This chapter comprises three visions, each introduced by the formula, "And I saw" (vs. 1, 6, 14). The first vision gives but one scene, the second contains three, the third two. They may be exhibited as follows :

Vision I, scene 1, vs. 1-5: FIRSTFRUITS with the Lamb on Mount Zion.

Vision II, scene 2, vs. 6, 7: An angel announces the hour of judgment.

Scene 3, ver. 8: A second angel declares the fall of Babylon the great.

Scene 4, vs. 9-13: A third angel warns men not to worship the Beast.

Vision III, scene 5, vs. 14-16: The Son of Man on a cloud reaps His HARVEST.

Scene 6, vs. 17-20: The VINTAGE is trodden on earth.

This outline of events is simple and illuminating. As before remarked, in studying the *Revelation* it is always helpful to observe at what point in any series of events the rule and persecution of the Beast is placed. That is the central fixed point of the End Days, just as the parousia of Christ is their closing point. From the Beast we can work backwards and forwards in studying those times.

In the present series, scene 4 is this fixed point, for men are warned not to worship him or his image or to receive his mark, upon peril of everlasting torment. Again, as in the preceding vision (13. 10), it is declared that now in peculiar measure the saints will need patience; and again they are given the double description of "they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." A voice from heaven pronounces an emphatic blessing upon such as die in the Lord from that hour and onward, for as their labours and sufferings for Christ will abound, so will their rest therefrom be sweet and their recompense therefor be great. From 20. 4 we learn they will be sure of having part in the first resurrection and thus of sharing the sovereignty of their Lord in His kingdom then imminent.

Scene 3, the fall of Babylon, is merely mentioned here, because it was to be elaborated in c. 17. The point from that chapter to be noted now is, that the Woman Babylon is to be destroyed by the Beast before he becomes supreme and in order that he may do so.

Scene 2 indicates the exact hour of affairs that has arrived : the hour of divine judgment has struck. Of course, even then there will be grace for each individual that will seek it, for men are still called to worship God and therefore are given opportunity to do so. But the characteristic of God's ways thenceforth will be judgment, and especially with the affairs corporate of mankind, with his systems, religious and political. This marks the commencement of the Times of the End.

Scene 1 is of a company of persons " purchased out of the earth . . . from among men." They are seen standing with the Lamb on the Mount Zion before the hour of judgment commences. We shall consider later what is said concerning these, only pointing out now that thus the chapter presents :—

1. Some of the redeemed in heaven before the End Days start.
2. The arrival of the hour of judgment, but men still having command and opportunity to turn to God.
3. The destruction of the false religious system Mystery Babylon.
4. The reign of the Beast and the consequent Tribulation.

Scene 5, following the persecution of the saints, presents the Son of Man reaping His grain Harvest. The following particulars are important.

(i) The Lord is now sitting on a cloud ; so that by this stage of events He has ceased to be in the midst of the throne and has descended to the clouds. The parousia has commenced. In scene 1 He was on the Mount Zion in the heavens, the songs were " before the throne," the living creatures and elders were present ; now these features are absent, for He has left that upper region and is near the earth.

(ii) He wears a golden crown, for the hour of His sovereignty has come.

(iii) He holds a sharp sickle, for it is the hour of harvest. This sickle He casts upon the earth and the harvest is gathered. The AV rendering "*thrust* in Thy sickle" and "He that sat on the cloud *thrust* in His sickle" greatly blurs the picture. For in the first instance the word is " send " (*πέμψων*) and in the latter it is " cast " (*ἔβαλεν*), yet these different words are rendered by one English word, and that a word which does not answer to either.

In the last scene (ver. 19) the second term comes twice, and the AV first translates it again inaccurately by "thrust" and then correctly by "and *cast* it [the vine] into the winepress." The RV renders the word properly in each case.

The importance of the matter is that for a reaper to *thrust* in his sickle into standing corn he must himself be standing on the earth by the grain. This is precisely where the Reaper is *not*. He is not standing but sitting. He is not on the earth but on the cloud. He does not thrust His sickle, but is bidden to "send" it, and therefore He "casts" it. He does not thrust it *in* but casts it *upon* (it is *ἐπὶ* not *εἰς* or *ἐπει*). To "send forth" and to "cast upon" are actions which imply some distance between the person acting and the sphere upon which he acts; which notion is essential to the right interpretation of this vision. This is one instance from many of how the AV seriously hinders the study of prophecy.

Thus the picture is of our Lord acting from the cloud, and gathering up the harvest of the earth, the sowing for which He himself commenced (Mt 13. 37; "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man") and the ripening of which He has carefully watched. Now the "hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the earth is dried up"; and, as He himself foretold, "when the fruit is ripe, straightway he sendeth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mk 4. 29). He has also explained that the "sickle" means angels. Mt 13. 30, 41, 49: "the Son of Man shall send forth His angels."

It is sometimes suggested that this is a judgment scene because it is the harvest of the *earth*, and because the term "dried up" means also "withered." To the first objection it suffices to answer that in Mk 4. 29, just quoted, the growth of grain *on the earth* ("the *earth* beareth fruit of itself"), and the harvesting operation, are a picture of the kingdom of God, not of the kingdom of darkness; and that in the parallel parables of Mt 13 there is good seed which grows on good ground, still on the earth, and brings forth good fruit, that is, "sons of the kingdom" (Mt 13. 38). Moreover, the objection would tell equally against the "first-fruits" of our chapter being godly persons, for they too were "purchased out of the *earth*."

The second objection fails to allow that, whereas the withering of a hand (Mk 3. 1), or of a tree (Mt 21. 19), or of an immature wheat stalk (Mt 13. 6), is the ruin thereof, on the contrary the drying of the kernel in the husk is the perfecting of grain for storing, grinding, and baking. In the hot lands, the weather being certain, the grain is not reaped when golden, and not

wholly free from moisture, but is left till it is white, and therefore "dried up" (hence "white unto harvest," Jn 4. 35), for the stalk and husk are literally withered and the kernel is dry and loose, making threshing easy.

This is an admirable picture of the spiritual process by which the heir of heaven becomes more and more detached in heart from the natural resources on which he necessarily draws in measure during his earthly growth, and at last is made in spirit entirely independent thereof. At this stage we properly say of a mature saint that "he is ripe for heaven." Now what the burning heat of the summer sun does for the grain, tribulation does for the godly; and Christ Himself used the sun with its scorching heat as the figure of tribulation or persecution arising because of the word (Mt 13. 6, 21). It is in strict harmony with this that the present vision of the harvest follows the vision of the Tribulation under the Beast. That was the burning heat which indeed withered the weakly ("because iniquity shall be multiplied the love of the many shall wax cold" Mt 24. 12), but which quickly ripened those who were well-rooted. Then, as ever, tribulation is death to the carnal, but the perfecting of life to the spiritual; and thus the great Tribulation, which will be a judgment upon the ungodly, is in its issue a benefit to the godly by fitting them for the harvest. For the heavenly Husbandman reaps no grain until it is fully ripe, but He garners it immediately it is so: "*when the fruit is ripe, straightway he sendeth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come*" (Mk 4. 29).

Vision 6, the Vintage, need not detain us long, for there is general agreement that it is the destruction of the wicked at the descent of the Lord to the earth. It is the same event as is portrayed in 19. 11-21, where the Word of God comes to "smite the nations" and "treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God," overthrowing the Beast and his armies. It is the fulfilment of Is 63. 1-6, "I have trodden the winepress." For the purpose of our present study the significant fact is that this scene brings the Lord down to the earth itself: "the winepress was trodden outside the city," that is, Jerusalem, against which the Beast and his armies will be concentrated when the Lord descends to the mount of Olives for the salvation of Israel and the overthrow of Gentile power (Zh 14. 1-5).

II. Scene 1. We turn back to examine closely the opening scene, the company that stands with the Lamb on the Mount Zion.

(i) This scene is in heaven, not on earth.

(a) We shall prove presently that this series of visions is in a strict and unalterable sequence: that Scene 1 is the first, and depicts circumstances which cannot belong later than the place they occupy as opening the series. This will involve that the Mount Zion where the Lamb stands is the heavenly Zion, for Christ does not descend to the earthly Zion until the event which forms the last of this series of visions, as just above mentioned. The saints who are seen with the Lamb know the reality pointed to by the words "ye have come unto Mount Zion" (Hb 12. 22).

(b) The song in which these alone of men can join is sung "before the throne." As before remarked, this phrase always in the *Revelation* indicates the presence of God in heaven. Its occurrences are:

(1) 1. 4, 5. "Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven spirits which are *before His throne*; and from Jesus Christ." It is the place where the Father, the Spirit, and the Son are.

(2, 3) 4. 5, 6. "And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning *before the throne*, which are the seven spirits of God; and *before the throne* as it were a sea of glass like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures." Here the phrase is one of four: "out of," "in the midst of," "round about," and "before" the throne, and the last cannot be dissociated from the others. If the crystal sea, which is "before the throne" can be somewhere else than in heaven, then may the phrase point to some other region. The locality is undoubtedly the presence of God in heaven. The Lamb, the elders, and the living creatures are present.

(4, 5) 4. 10. "the four and twenty elders shall fall down *before* Him that sitteth upon *the throne* . . . and shall cast their crowns *before the throne*." Obviously the elders do not so act on earth, but in heaven. They who argue (though mistakenly) that the elders represent glorified saints in heaven ought to be the last to say that "before the throne" does not mean heaven.

(6, 7, 8) 7. 9, 11, 15. The "great multitude" who have "come out of the great tribulation" are "standing *before the throne*" and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes. God is "on" the throne, these are "before" the throne, the angels are "round about" the throne and also they "fall *before the throne*." If the throne itself, and the worship of all the angels, is on earth at this time, then, but not otherwise, will the place of this multitude be on earth.

(9) 8. 3. This is a heavenly scene, for the angel takes the

censer, fills it with fire from “the golden altar which was *before the throne*,” and casts it upon (into *εἰς*) the earth; so that he was not on earth, neither was this altar.

(10, 11) 14. 3. There is not the slightest ground for giving any other sense to the phrase in our present passage, for here also the locality is the place of the living creatures, the elders, the harpers, and the Lamb.

(c) Therefore the Firstfruits are said to have been purchased “out of the earth,” which expression indicates that they have been taken away from the place where they were purchased. After having reached home a housekeeper might say, “I purchased this in the market.” This “in” is the English idiom; Greek says more precisely “out of the market.” But neither phrase would be strictly exact so long as she was still in the market, for it presumes that she has taken the property purchased to some other place.

(d) The Firstfruits “follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.” It is a present participle—“these are those following,” and at that time the Lamb is still in heaven, for He does not leave heaven until the time of the Harvest.

(ii) The identity of these Firstfruits is revealed in the three-fold circumstance that they are (a) on the Mount Zion, in the heavenly Jerusalem; (b) they have the name of the Lamb; and (c) the name of his Father written on their foreheads. As the worshippers of the Beast will be visibly identified with him, so are these with the Father, the Lamb, and the heavenly city. But this correspondence cannot be seen in the AV, because, through a faulty Greek text, it does not here mention the name of the Lamb.

This triple connection is found elsewhere only in the promise to the overcomers of the churches: “He that overcometh . . . I will write upon him (a) the name of My God, and (b) the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and (c) mine own new name” (3. 12). Thus these Firstfruits are the Overcomers in the battles of the Lord.

(iii) That a specific number is applied to them itself suggests that they are a limited company. In contrast, those who later on come out of the great Tribulation are “a great multitude” the number of which cannot be estimated (7. 9). Some consider this number should be taken literally. The event will settle the matter, but we feel no obligation so to regard it. See p. 21 on Symbolic Language, and p. 315 on the Bride.

But it is very important to show that this 144,000 are by no means the same company as that so numbered in c. 7. 1-8.

(a) That company are specified as Israelites, each of the tribes being named separately: these are drawn from the wider circle of mankind at large; they are "purchased out of *the earth*" and "from among *men*," not from Israel in particular or alone.

(b) That company are on earth: these are in heaven, as shown.

(c) The Israelites are sealed after Seal 6 has passed, which Seal is marked by the seven features which our Lord declared should follow immediately the Tribulation of those days (Mt 24. 29, 30). That Seals 6 and 7 follow the Tribulation is further shown by the fact that between them are seen in heaven the great multitude who come out of that Tribulation, and by the fact that before Seal 6 the souls of the beheaded are seen under the altar. But the Firstfruits are seen with the Lamb in heaven before the End Days even commence.

(d) The remnant of Israel are sealed in order that they may be preserved from the final judgments which will fall within the Day of the Lord. But the Firstfruits are taken away from the earth before the hour of judgment strikes, and are in no danger from the Day of the Lord.

Thus these companies have no marks of identity, but several of complete contrast, save only that the number is the same. That the same number is applied to two companies so widely separated in time and circumstance, rather indicates that the number is not literal in either case, but has a moral value applicable to both cases. See Prelim. Discussion I, p. 21.

(iv) The moral qualities belonging to this company of Firstfruits are highly significant.

1. They are of the number of the redeemed; they were "purchased," and this from among "men," not Israel only.

2. They were "not defiled with women; for they are virgins." This is marked as a peculiar excellence, "these are they," these are the particular persons.

The attempts to show that this means that they remained unmarried we think have failed. Granted that to remain unmarried for the sake of the gospel is a high excellence, this does not prove what is required by the statement that marriage is *defiling*. It were inexplicable that Scripture should enforce that marriage is honourable in all and later declare it to be defiling. That Peter and the other apostles were married (Mt 8. 14: 1 Cr 9. 5) does not hinder them having the special honour of being the very foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem in its eternal glory (Rv 21. 14).

This attempt is an example of the unsatisfactoriness of the rigidly literal treatment of an oriental treatise. Oriental intertwining of the literal and the figurative is a characteristic of Scripture, and not least in its use of this particular figure. The very term virgin is applied to every believer to indicate the present relation to Christ in which we are presumed to have been placed by faith in Him (II Cr 11. 2, 3). These Firstfruits had successfully resisted the accompanying peril, of which Paul warned, of the thoughts and affections being seduced by Satan from attachment to Christ alone. They had not incurred the solemn reproach of making themselves enemies of God by friendship with the world (Js 4. 4). This last warning must needs be for true Christians, since the unbeliever is already an enemy of God (Rm 5. 10 : Cl 1. 21), and therefore cannot make himself one.

3. Consistently with this the Firstfruits are followers of the Lamb without reserve ; they follow Him " whithersoever He goeth." This involves that they had done this on earth, when it costs something to do so ; for the Lord declared this to be the principle of fellowship with Him, as in the promise to the overcomer at Sardis, that he should walk about with Him in white because he had kept his garments white on earth (3. 4, 5). Attracted to His person they had fulfilled the inflexible conditions of discipleship, that Christ shall have unquestioned precedence over every other person, that each shall bear his own cross and follow the Lord, and that all rights of every sort are surrendered to the Lord's disposal (Lk 14. 26, 27, 33). Going thus after Him these had reached the place that He had reached by that same path of life, even as He had promised, " where I am there shall also My servant be " (Jn 12. 26) : and now they are His personal companions for ever.

4. They are *firstfruits*, that is, those of the harvest first ripened, first reaped, first presented to God and the Lamb. That they are firstfruits unto the Lamb is another proof that they are not regarded as Israelites ; for, as has been shown, Jews as such will not accept Jesus as the Lamb of God prior to seeing Him in glory at Jerusalem.

It was an ancient divine ordinance that as soon as enough grain was ripe for making a sheaf, it should be gathered and be presented to God in the temple (Ex 23. 19 ; 34. 26 ; etc.). This would be in the early summer. It would be followed shortly by the onset of the intense summer heat, which presently ripening the whole field would bring on the general harvest, which in turn would be followed by the vintage.

Now the firstfruits were presented to God in the temple ; but

the harvest, though removed indeed from the field where it had grown, would not be taken as far away as to Jerusalem, but only as far as to the granary adjacent to the fields ; whilst the clusters of the vine would not be taken to any distance, the winepresses being in the vineyard itself (Is 5. 2 : Mt 21. 33). Similarly in the present antitype, these Firstfruits are taken up to the immediate presence of God and the Lamb in heaven ; the Harvest is removed only as far as to the clouds, whither the Lord has by then descended ; whilst the vintage is trodden where it grew, on the earth itself.

In this picture now before us certain features are distinct.

(a) That the Firstfruits and the Harvest are from the same sowing, grown in the same field, and are of the same class of grain. There is no distinction between them, save that the former, having ripened earlier, did not need the intense summer heat and so were gathered before it set in. This corresponds to the Man-child being of the same family circle as the Rest of the Woman's seed : only he escaped the period of the Beast and his persecution of the saints, which the Rest of the family endured.

(b) As the Man-child was caught up as high as to God and His throne, so are the Firstfruits seen on Mount Zion in the heavens, where the throne is. That the throne and Mount Zion are associated is seen in the fact that the Father, the Lamb, the elders, and the living creatures, who all are connected with the throne in c. 4, are connected with Mount Zion in c. 14. As in the earthly Jerusalem Zion was the spot where were "set thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David" (Ps 122. 5), so is the heavenly Zion the place of the throne of God and of the thrones of the elders who are associated with Him as rulers. As the Man-child was taken to the throne of God itself, and so higher than, and to superiority over, the elders who sat around, for he is to rule all nations, so the Firstfruits are taken into closest association with the Lamb when He is about to reign. This position in the heavens at this early stage of the End Days effectually forbids that these are the persons who are to meet the Lord in the air near to this earth according to I Th 4. 16, 17.

(c) Thus it is seen that as the End Times approach one company of the redeemed—the smaller portion, as firstfruits are less than the whole subsequent harvest, and as a man-child is less than the remainder of the family—reach the upper heavens prior to the arising of the Beast, whilst a second company are taken to the clouds on the descent of Christ thereto, after the Tribulation under the Beast, and prior to the descent of the Lord to the earth

to destroy him. This latter coincides exactly with what is taught concerning the Parousia, namely, that the elect will be gathered by angels at the moment when the "Son of Man comes on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Mt 24. 30, 31). That coming and this Scene 5 are both placed at the same point, after the great Tribulation ; and that coming is accompanied with a "great sound of a trumpet," as is the descent mentioned in I Th 4. 16 ; it is also the moment for the first "outshining of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ," which is the blessed hope of the church (Tt 2. 13).

In no one of these passages do we find the least hint that Christ will leave the throne of the Father prior to the moment thus indicated, nor in any other scripture. There is no suggestion that *He comes* for the Man-child, the Firstfruits ; both are taken right up to Him where He then still is, at the throne of God. This, we repeat, cannot be I Th 4. 18, and therefore also the *resurrection* of the godly does not take place at this time.

(v) Thus we have two definite promises to Christians of a possible escape from the End Days (Lk 21. 36 : Rv 3. 10), and two remarkable and coinciding pictures of those who do so escape, the Man-child and the Firstfruits. But those promises are contingent upon moral conditions, conditions seen to attach to the Man-child and the Firstfruits. For these maintained a holy separation and purity ; they were Calebites who followed the Lord wholly ; instead of not profiting by the more moderate ripening influences of the early summer they responded thereto fully, and so were ripe for early gathering.

It is further added that "in their mouth was found no lie." Lying is one of the most universal of sins. To most of mankind it has always been and still is a natural habit. These Firstfruits had answered thoroughly to the precept, "putting away falsehood speak ye truth each one with his neighbour" (Eph 4. 25). This is no small attainment for such as must live with, and compete with, a community given up to lying. Most especially difficult is absolute truthfulness in days of fierce persecution, when a true avowal of faith will assure distress or even death, which might be avoided by some equivocation: These had remembered that their Lord was the Truth, that He spake only truth, and before Pilate bore witness to the truth, and suffered the penalty by death. There was no guile in His mouth, and they spurned it from theirs. Their Yea was yea, and their Nay, nay ; and so now they are found "sincere and void of offence" in His presence.

Indeed, they are described finally as being "without blemish." This term means to be without any feature to which blame or

reproof can attach. It refers definitely to *external* appearance. Lv 22. 19-25 and 21. 16-24—where the LXX use this word (*ἀμωμός*) and its opposite *blemish*—are clear as to this sense. To be “without blemish” an animal was to be neither blind, broken, maimed, nor having wen, scurvy, or scab, and there was to be nothing superfluous or lacking. All this was indispensable for an animal to be presented to Jehovah in His temple. So also a priest was to be thus externally complete if he was “to go in unto the veil or to come nigh unto the altar.” Birth relationship to Aaron was indispensable but not sufficient for access to the presence of God. That one offered the due sacrifice as atonement for his sins did not suffice for this privilege, though it did suffice for his pardon and justification and therefore for his exemption from the judgment due to his sins. For access to God’s holy place and for priestly service wholeness of person, external completeness, was equally indispensable.

The New Testament strongly emphasizes the spiritual counterpart of this type. Christ Jesus, inherently, not by acquirement, and always, not by development, was without blemish, and as such he offered himself unto God (Hb 9. 14), and His precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish, is the redemption price of our freedom (I Pt 1. 18, 19).

Now this freedom includes liberation from the power of sin, for “He gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works” (Tt 2. 14). And this work is to be, and cannot help but be, visible in the lives of His people in its evident effects. It is the very purpose of the Father, for which, indeed, “He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him” (Eph 1. 4).

This term “before Him” (*κατενώπιον*) comes only twice elsewhere, and in both places is associated with the expression “without blemish” as the necessary state in which they must be who are to stand before Him. In Jd 24 we read that God is able “to guard you from stumbling and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy.” Since God is able the thing is possible; but the precedent operation through which He reaches this end is that He guards us from stumbling on the journey of life.

II Pt 1. 1-4 gives the divine side, even that God “has granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness”: and verses 5-11 show the response on our side which is indispensable if the grant is to be realized, namely, “adding on your part all diligence . . . give the more diligence . . . for if ye do these

things ye shall never stumble." It is wrong and foolish to depend upon Jude's assurance that God is able to guard from stumbling so long as one ignores Peter's statement as to the condition on our side for being thus guarded. Both are the words of the Holy Spirit.

So also in Cl 1. 22, 23 it is said that Christ "*hath now* reconciled us *in the body of His flesh through death*," which reconciliation is a present and unchangeable fact ; and this He has done with the intention "*to present you holy and without blemish and unblameable before Him*." But whereas the reconciliation through His death is a present and eternal reality for the believer, the presentation before Him in the glory is conditional, as is next declared in the words, "*to present you holy and without blemish and unreprovable before Him, if so be that ye continue in the faith and not moved away from the hope of the gospel.*"

Thus also do we read in Eph 5. 25, that husbands are to love their own wives "*even as Christ also loved the church*,¹ and gave Himself up for her"—here is the redemption price for her to be freed from the former slavery ; and this He did "*that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the laver of [that is, which is formed by] water in the word*," that is, by the grace of the Holy Spirit made available to us in the Word of God, which sanctifies the obedient (Jn 15. 3 ; 17. 17 : I Pt 1. 22). This sanctifying He effects for this final purpose, "*that He might present [ταπιστημι παριστῆμι, a word of similar force to κατενοπιον] the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing* ; but that she should be holy and without blemish."

Here, as in Leviticus, the words "*spot or wrinkle or any such thing*" illustrate the force of "*without blemish*" as being external perfectness ; and the passage strongly emphasizes that this visible moral beauty, which is based upon redemption, is realised through sanctification produced by the Spirit and the Word.

The girl in the slave market is purchased by the Prince out of love, in order that she may become his bride, his queen. The redemption price for ever alters her status from slavery to a due yet free attachment to her Redeemer ; but very obviously much more than the purchase price is needful ere she can actually sit by his side in his palace. Every spot and blemish contracted in the old life must be removed and she become as actually and outwardly beautiful as she is legally free.

¹ Surely this parallel were unaccountable and, indeed, incorrect, if marriage were in any sense inherently defiling.

We have no manner of right to read this passage thus : " Christ loved the church, and gave Himself up for her, that He might present her to Himself." Through the redemption by blood justification is complete and everlasting, upon faith ; but between that and the being glorified in His presence lies sanctification. And of this process so much is possible in this life that in the only other place in the NT where this expression " without blemish " is found, we read : " Do all things without murmurings and disputings ; that ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as luminaries in the world, holding forth the word of life ; that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ, that I did not run in vain, neither labour in vain " (Ph 2. 14-16). This shows that to be without blemish points to no unattainable height of holiness, but that the grace of God can make us and keep us thus before men ; and this will be a glory in the day of Christ.

By the power of God and the Word of God the Firstfruits had so lived, and now, in vision, they are seen before the presence of His glory in exceeding joy. We have enlarged upon this theme of holiness because in it are concentrated, and driven home on the conscience, all those calls for moral attainment which have sounded from each of the passages which offer the hope of escaping the End Times. It is worse than foolish to decline to recognize this so strongly marked moral element by the unsupported assertion that all believers do live as is so described. Both Scripture and experience deny this assertion, whilst they proclaim loudly the danger of turning from the faith and of being moved away from the hope of the gospel, even the sharing the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ at His parousia.

Christians do cease to watch and do fail in supplications, they do stumble and do not always keep the word of Christ's patience ; and it is neither true exegesis nor sound morally to console such with the assurance that they are equally certain to attain the position and privileges now in question as are those who, by the due use of the grace of God, walk in His fear. The solemn examples of failure, the searching warnings, the powerful exhortations of Holy Scripture, were given most expressly for us " upon whom the ends of the ages are come. Wherefore let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall " (I Cr 10. 11, 12). The faithfulness of God is sure ; the way of escape, that we may be able to *endure* all trial, will ever be opened ; but the consequences to the believer of receiving that grace in vain are not to

be avoided, even as the privileges certainly will not be forfeited if we stedfastly walk by faith unto the end.

It remains only to show that the six Scenes of Rv 14 are in strict and unalterable sequence, and then this discussion can be summarized and closed.

1. That a series of visions of this type, so presented to the eye of the seer, should expose events in the sequence in which they will occur, is what is to be expected, for otherwise the relation of each event to the others were almost indiscernible, and indeed the visions would be confusing and misleading by at least suggesting a false order. In that case the *Revelation* would be rather a veiling than an unveiling of the future. Moreover, each of the other sets of visions in this book is in order of occurrence.

We deem it to be an important purpose of this portion of the Word of God to straighten out, if it may be so put, the various interlacing lines of forecast which were drawn in preceding ages. Information which had been given "piecemeal" (Hb 1. 1 πολυμερῶς) is in this book systematized and completed. The many momentous affairs which will be crowded into the End Times are here exhibited in groups of related events.

2. That Scenes 3 and 4 of this series are in the order in which they will happen is to be learned from c. 17. For the Woman Babylon is destroyed by the Beast in order that he may reign universally; therefore before he does so; therefore before the worship of his image or the persecution of non-conforming saints intimated in Scene 4.

3. That Scenes 2, 3 and 4 are in proper order is indicated by the use of ordinal numbers, a feature not brought out in the AV. Scene 2 speaks of "another angel," that is, one whom John had not seen in any of the preceding visions. Scene 3 (ver. 8), says that "another, a *second* angel followed;" and Scene 4 says that "another angel, a *third*, followed them." Now whereas the cardinal numbers, one, two, three, do not require priority of order for one thing over another, first, second, and third do indicate sequence as the very idea of those terms; for the second cannot be before the first nor after the third: the order is unchangeable.

4. That Scenes 5 and 6 are in proper order in relation to each other is clear, for, as all are agreed, the gathering up of the elect is to take place at *some* time prior to the descent of the Lord to destroy the Beast.

5. That Scenes 1, 5 and 6 are in proper order in relation to each other is evident from the agricultural figure which is wrought

into them. For, as we have seen, the Jewish farming operations were that in the early summer the sheaf of FIRSTFRUITS was gathered and presented in the temple ; later, the general HARVEST was reaped ; last of all, at the end of the season, the VINTAGE was gathered and trodden in the winepresses. The order of these three operations cannot be inverted. In the very nature of things firstfruits cannot follow harvest, or it would not be *firstfruits* ; neither did the vintage ever come before harvest.

This further negatives another view of Scene 1, which is that it forms an anticipatory view of the whole outcome of the divine action detailed in the series of visions following. It is regarded as a “ preface of blessing ” given in advance to relieve the darkness of following judgments by showing the final outcome of good to which they lead. But, as has been said, firstfruits must be *firstfruits* ; the term itself forbids an application of itself to the *final* stage of matters. The *first* of a series cannot be also the *whole*, least of all the *last* thereof : it *must* be but a portion of the whole, and the earliest portion.

6. The fixity of this order in agriculture further proves that Scene 4 must come between Scenes 1 and 5, for it is undoubted fact that Christ pictured persecution by the figure of the scorching summer sun ; and it is indisputable that firstfruits were gathered before the intensest heat burst, whilst harvest was reaped thereafter, being indeed brought about by its agency. Thus also the fiercest of all persecutions that saints will know will be escaped by the watchful, according to the promises considered, and according to the picture here of the Firstfruits, whilst the Harvest will follow that persecution.

7. Finally, it has been shown that Scenes 2, 3 and 4, the arriving of the hour of judgment, the fall of Babylon, and the supremacy of the Beast, cannot be separated or inverted ; and this involves that 2 and 3 must come between 1 and 4, since their connection with the latter and with each other is determined.

Thus by internal proofs it is demonstrated that Scenes 3 and 4 are shown in proper sequence ; also 2, 3, and 4 ; also 5 and 6 ; and then that Scenes 1, 4, and 5 are so exhibited ; and finally that number 1 cannot be put elsewhere than before 2, 3, and 4. It will be found that this involves that no transposition whatever is allowable.

Nor do we know of any change of order being desired save for Scene 1. But why cannot this one Scene be accepted happily by expositors as being in its proper place in the series, and as being located in heaven ? To this there seems no answer save that, thus placed and regarded, it refuses to fit into either the scheme

that declares that every believer will be caught away to meet the Lord in the air before the End Days, or into the scheme that declares that every believer must pass through the End Days and that there is to be no rapture before the end of the Tribulation.

But this Scene does fit exactly into the program that there will be a removal of some before that dread era and a removal of the rest at the close thereof. Nor, exercising all charity, can we conceive of any other suggestion being gained from the chapter by a mind that could consider the series without a previous decision that one or other of the two schemes mentioned is unchallengeable. Is any intellectual process more difficult than to rid the mind of a prepossession when one honestly thinks it to be well-founded ?

The sequence of events here proposed is :—

1. The removal of a portion of the church of God, not to the air, but to Christ, at the throne of the Father.
2. The hour of judgment begins : the End Times commence.
3. The Woman Babylon is destroyed, as in c. 17.
4. The Beast reigns and persecutes. The Great Tribulation.
5. The Lord Jesus descends to the air. The rapture and resurrection of I Th 4.
6. The Lord descends to Olivet and destroys the Beast.

Three major points are to be kept in mind.

(i) The the Lord does not come for the Firstfruits. They are simply taken away as were Enoch and Elijah.

(ii) No resurrection attends the removal of the Firstfruits.

(iii) The Firstfruits are promised no priority in the kingdom over equally victorious saints of earlier days. These will reach their portion shortly after by resurrection. The advantage of being of the Firstfruits will be the escaping the dread days of the End, as it is said : “ that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man ” (Lk 21. 34-36).

CHAPTER XI

THE SEVEN BOWLS

(Cs. 15 and 16)

These chapters are one vision, for the seven plagues mentioned in 15. 1 are detailed in c. 16.

Trumpet 7 (11. 15) carries forward the view to the setting up of the millennial kingdom : "the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord" ; and the twenty-four elders give thanks for the rewarding of the godly and the destruction of the destroyers of the earth (11. 18). Thereupon John was shown (19) that "there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven ; and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant ; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail."

This last scene, however, is not subsequent to the seventh trumpet, but part of it, and is preparatory to a further vision which will show how that destruction of the destroyers of the earth will be effected. This is the theme of cs. 15 and 16. For ver. 1 of c. 15 declares that the outpouring of the Bowls will complete the wrath of God, and ver. 5 resumes the picture of 11. 19, the opening of the temple in heaven. Then, after the Bowls have been poured out, 16. 17 proclaims that "it has come to pass" (*Γέγονεν*), and then repeats the remainder of 11. 19, "and there came [*ἔγενετο*, that is, after the completion of the Bowls] lightnings, and voices, and thunders ; and there came (*ἔγενετο*) a great earthquake." Verse 21 completes the parallel by describing in detail the great hail. Thus cs. 15 and 16 are an expansion of 11. 19, and give the details of the 3rd Woe under Tr. 7. This shows that cs. 12, 13, and 14 are a parenthesis.

The exact point where the Bowls come in the mighty drama of the End Days is shown distinctly in vs. 2-4 of c. 15, for those who "come off victorious from the Beast" (ASV) are seen standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God, and singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. The Great Tribulation therefore had reached its end, and those who had conquered the Beast had been removed to the heavenly world.

It is noteworthy that the song of these victors is that of Moses and of the Lamb in combination. This song in heaven is a divine

epitome of that earlier song divinely given to Moses (Dt 32), the theme of which was (1) the greatness of God: " ascribe ye greatness to our God," and (2) " His *work* is perfect "; (3) " all His *ways* are justice "; (4) " *just* and right is He." So here we find " (1) *Great* and marvellous are (2) Thy *works*, O Lord God the Almighty ; (3, 4) *righteous* and *true* are Thy *ways*, Thou King of the ages." Further, the close of Moses' song was a vision of God wielding His glittering sword, rendering vengeance to His adversaries ; and then of the nations rejoicing with Israel, His people, whom He has chastened, humbled, exalted (Dt 32. 40-43). So here : " Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name ? for Thou art holy ; for all the nations shall come and worship before Thee ; for Thy righteous acts have been made manifest."

It is to be remembered that the giving of the law was not the primary office of Moses. The law came in addition to his chief and greatest service (Rm 5. 20), being made necessary by the hardness of men's hearts. As the promulgator of law Moses stood in contrast to Christ, for " the law was given through Moses ; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ " (Jn 1. 17). But the original and higher office of Moses was to deliver the enslaved and to bring them into the freedom of the redeemed, and in this Moses and the Lamb are one, Moses being a forerunner and type of Christ.

In our chapter the hour has been reached when the predictions in the song of Moses shall be realized through the redemption and the judgments of the Lord Jesus, and the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb are now one song. The law and its judgments have served the good end of bringing the spared of both Israel and the nations unto Christ : and now these of the redeemed, the victors over the Beast, celebrate this mighty epoch.

It is to effect the completion of this age-long process that the Bowl judgments are employed. They will remove the now irreclaimable adversaries of God ; and the remnant of Israel and of the nations shall come and worship before Him, because His righteous acts have been made manifest (4).

How comprehensive are the ways of God. They embrace the long millenniums in one view, join the beginning and the end of affairs international, and show the blessed comforting fact that God is " the King of the ages," working out " the purpose of the ages " which He formed in His own mind before the ages began (Eph 3. 11; 1. 11). Satan and man have wrought chaos and misery, but God is not to be defeated, and shall triumph at last.

What firstly engages the mind of saints glorified is here seen. It is not their own conflicts or victories, nor even the grand

recompense the grace of God has granted, to share in the glories of the world on high: it is rather the greatness of God and the vastness of His plans now come to a mighty crisis and advance.

Three companies from earth have now been shown in heaven. It will be well to compare them.

I. 14. 1. 144,000 redeemed out of the earth are seen on Mount Zion.

II. 7. 9-17. A multitude come out of the Great Tribulation are before the throne.

III. 15. 2-4. The victors over the Beast are by the glassy sea.

The details show these three companies to be distinct.

(1) *Their location.* Mount Zion in Jerusalem was the place of government: "there are set thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David" (Ps 122. 5). So also in the heavenly city. Company I are seen associated with the Lamb in the place of royalty and sovereignty. They are His personal companions, in constant attendance, to accompany Him whithersoever He may go in His universal kingdom.

Company II are only "before the throne," where are also the other servants of the Most High, angels and others. This multitude will be as Levites to serve in the temple of God.

Company III are also before the throne, but their position is more exactly specified as being "by the glassy sea." Now in the Tabernacle the laver was for the use of priests (Ex 30. 17-21). In the temple it was called a "sea," because of its great size, some fifteen feet across. In both cases it was made of brass, or copper, the metal of the altar, which endures fire. Also, it was when the priest acted in the matter of an offering by fire that he had to use the laver. So this sea of glass is "as mingled with fire," and this company have been through the fire of tribulation, and now are priestly in character and office, as their standing by the laver suggests.

(2) *Their time.* Company I are at the summit of dignity before the End Days set in. They are the "firstfruits" of the redeemed from the earth. Companies II and III have passed through the End Days as far as to the conclusion of the Tribulation. Their removal may have been at the same time, though they vary in place and dignity.

(3) *Their songs.* All three Companies sing, but different songs. Company I sing a "new song" that they only of the sons of men can learn. Company II simply ascribe "salvation" unto God and the Lamb. Their praise does not rise beyond "salvation," their own blessed experience. But, as remarked above, Com-

pany III enlarge their thoughts to extol the majesty of God and His works ; but it is a song that Moses had started long before. Neither Company I nor II have harps ; the third and more distinctly priestly Company have harps, not of David, the leader of such praise in the earthly realm of old, but of God, heavenly accompaniments of praise.

(4) *Their Moral Characteristics.* The “Firstfruits” (Coy. I) had not defiled their persons or lips ; their ways and words had been without blemish. The Great Multitude (Coy. II) had required to wash their robes ; their outer ways had been defiled and needed cleansing. Nor is it said that they had *defeated* the Beast, but only that they came out of the Tribulation purified. Company III are declared plainly to have conquered in the conflict with the Beast, and there is no mention of their garments, their visible life, needing to be washed.

Had such plain distinctions as these been observed by all teachers and hymn writers, the people of God would have been spared much confusion through the merging of all the saints into one undifferentiated throng, with the consequent and truly serious loss of moral impetus to attain unto the rich and distinct prizes, open indeed to all, but requiring to be gained. Morally powerful truths would not then have been smothered under the one all-inclusive but greatly mis-applied phrase “going to heaven,” as picturing the lot of all the saved equally.

There would then have been more meaning and more moral force in the statement that even in glory one star differeth from another star. The principle stated by the angel to Daniel (Dn 12. 3) would have been known to be of permanent force, that it is the *wise* who shall radiate brightness from their resplendent persons, and that it is those who have gained by grace the moral character and spiritual energy to turn many to righteousness who shall shine for ever as stars. Then would have been felt more adequately the power of our Lord’s words that it is the *righteous* who shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Mt 13. 43).

God be praised that through the one atoning work of the Lamb all believers will be in the kingdom of God, and not in the realm of the lost ; but not all will be in the Millennial kingdom, nor of those who are so privileged will all be in its heavenly portion ; neither will all who reach the last mentioned honour be as stars or suns in glory ; and among these last there will be greater and lesser lights to rule and to radiate in that upper firmament of His power. It was fifty years ago that a great teacher, speaking of the English-speaking world, said what is, alas, more true to-day

than even then, that "No more alarming sign exists in the Church of God to-day than this, that so small a part of our church-members ever convert a soul to God" (A. T. Pierson, *The Divine Enterprise of Missions*, 119). Therefore only a few, of this period and this portion of the earth at least, will shine as stars in the heavens.

Finally, it is to be noted that nothing indicates that any dead believers are included in either of these three Companies. Their case is dealt with in c. 20.

We return to the judgments of the Bowls.

"The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened." The imagery and terms are taken from the Tabernacle in the wilderness. That dwelling of God among men was a copy of His actual dwelling place in the height of the heavenly world (Hb 1. 3 ; 4. 14 ; 8. 1 ; 9. 23, 24). There is maintained in Holy Scripture an uniform distinction between the Son of God, Who has passed through all the regions of heaven and has entered into that holy of holies where sits "the Majesty in the heights," and the Father at Whose right hand the Son acts as the Advocate of His people. With this whole picture of a real sanctuary and a real Person therein, that theological conception will not agree which almost evaporates the Father of the Lord Jesus into a Deity unlocalized, and invisible, not only to man on earth (the force of I Tm 1. 17), but absolutely.

In that heavenly world also there is a sanctuary, a holy of holies, commonly closed it would seem, but on occasion opened, as in this vision. In it is the true ark of the covenant, on the basis of which, through the virtue of the blood of Christ, all mercy, pardon, grace flow forth to the universe. But from that same sanctuary issue also the judgments, the true and righteous judgments of God, even as of old. It was thus that, in that earlier copy of heavenly things, "fire came forth from before Jehovah, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering," signifying the acceptance by God of atoning sacrifice ; and then, immediately after, when Nadab and Abihu violated the ordinance as to worship, by offering incense with fire not sanctified by atonement, again "there came forth fire from before Jehovah and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah" (Lv 9. 24 ; 10. 1, 2).

Behold now, at the end of the age, both the goodness and the severity of God ; the one toward such as had accepted His mercy in Christ, the other now to be executed without mercy upon the defiers of God and despisers of His Anointed.

So the seven angels of wrath come forth out of the sanctuary,

now opened earthward for the purpose of judgment. And until this, the strange work of God is finished there will be no access to the throne for any created being ; that is, all intercession and all worship in heaven are suspended. Heaven shall be occupied solely with this most terrible, yet unavoidable, and, in its issue, beneficial work of purging the world of God-haters and earth-corrupters, so that the favour of God may beam forth as the sun for the healing of the spared of mankind, and of nature (Ml 3. 1-3).

Intercession suspended in heaven ; supplication on earth unheeded ! How appalling ! Then shall be *fulfilled* Pv 1. 24-33 and Is 1. 24-31. God is now hidden in the "smoke" of His wrath ; and as at this time He alone is in His sanctuary, the Voice coming thence (16. 1) must be His, thus investing these judgments with the most awful solemnity, terror, and energy, as He commands the seven angels, " Go ye, and pour out the seven Bowls of the wrath of God into the earth."

As to the nature of the judgments, they correspond so closely to those inflicted upon Pharaoh and his servants and land that these must be taken to be as literal as were those. What has been can be again. And internal marks support and require this.

Bowl 1. In India to-day, as in ancient times, the devotee bears on his forehead the visible sign of the god he honours. The mark of the Beast and the worship of his image will be actual features, employing the bodies of his devotees. The grievous sore will be God's indignant reply to this prostitution of the body to false worship.

Bowl 2. The divine power that turned to blood the mighty Nile can turn to blood the Sea into which the Nile flows. As that judgment deprived the people of Egypt of fish food, so will this judgment deprive the people of many lands. This will be a severe infliction seeing how very much of the land surface of those countries will be by this time barren through war and heaven-sent desolation.

Bowl 3. The shedding of the blood of saints and prophets had been literal, and it is the declared justification of this judgment, which will compel the murderers to drink blood or not drink at all. Thus had the Egyptians murdered Israel's infants and were given blood to drink.

Bowl 4. The term "these plagues" (plural) brackets this scorching by the heat of the sun with the three preceding judgments, which requires that this one be taken in the same sense as those, that is, literally.

That the period is the extreme end of the age is indicated by

men having become at last unchangeable in heart ; they are able and willing only to blaspheme their Judge, but neither willing nor able to repent, to change their attitude towards Him, to humble themselves under His mighty hand.

Bowl 5. That the throne of the Beast is the object of this plague indicates that the central area of the earth, Babylon, is the region of this judgment. This hint of locality is to be noted. That his throne is darkened must have upon his central administration the same paralysing effect as accompanied the darkness in Egypt : "they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place" (Ex 10. 23). This attack at the centre will hasten the disorganizing of his affairs and kingdom, which confusion must impede his resistance to the Lamb.

The picture is terrible : men sitting in pitch darkness, gnawing their tongues for pain, yet using their tongues to pour forth the blasphemies of their obdurate hearts. To what miseries of soul and body does sin reduce the sinner ! And to this tends ever that satanic infatuation with which the world's final monarch will fascinate mankind. His spirit is already in the world. "Little children, abide in Christ" (I Jn 2. 18 ; 4. 2, 3 ; 2. 28).

Bowl 6. The locality against which these judgments are directed is not now merely hinted but plainly stated. It is "the great river," the "Euphrates."

(1) In their nature, and in their darkening effects upon the study of the *Revelation*, the attempts to force this well-known name to mean Mohammedanism have been disastrous. From the strenuous efforts to give to the name Euphrates this fictitious meaning one might think that this is the only place where it is found, and that no plain clue to its meaning is available ; whereas the name and the river are well-known from the beginning to the close of Bible history, and could surely have only the one obvious sense to early readers of Moses, Jeremiah, and John. From Gn 2. 14 to Jr 51. 63 "Euphrates" in all its nineteen occurrences means only the well-known river, and thrice it is described by the exact term John uses, "the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gn. 15. 18 : Dt 1. 7 : Jh 1. 4).

(2) "The kings that come from the sunrising" is a pictorial orientalism for "from the east," where the sun rises. Dn 11. 44 deals with the precise epoch of our passage, the close of the career of the Beast. See my *Daniel* on that place. It tells that just at that time, Antichrist being in Egypt, "tidings out of the north and out of the east shall trouble him" and shall compel his return northward. Is 13. 17 and Jr 51. 11, 28, show that at that same time the "kings of the Medes" will attack Babylon, his capital.

Media lies *eastward* of the Euphrates ; its kings will therefore come against Babylon from the east.

(3) The drying up of the river will remove the chief natural obstacle to a rapid advance and attack. In Appendix C to *Daniel* it is pointed out that the wide and devastating wars, famines, plagues, and heaven-wrought destructions of those last times are almost certain to wreck modern mechanical and chemical production of armaments. Thus men will perforce use again the ancient methods and weapons, which is the plain force of the description in Ek 39. 9, 10, of the weapons of the army of Gog.

This being so it will follow that a mighty river like the Euphrates will be a serious obstacle to assaulting Babylon, especially as it must be regarded as certain that Antichrist will not only have beautified but have fortified his capital. Indeed, this is plainly stated, for Jr 51 speaks of her walls and gates (vs. 12, 58), her strongholds and defenders (30), and her high fortifications (53). In particular, the river will naturally be used as a defence, and so we read that "the passages (fords) are surprised," and "the reeds they have burned with fire" (32). The margin gives the Hebrew as "pools," that is, marshes, areas where reed-grass can grow. Such swamps on a large scale were almost impenetrable defences against war of the olden type. They would prove so in the case of Babylon at the end, but the sudden drying up of the great river will leave it easy of approach and assault, while the setting fire to the masses of reeds would endanger the city. Thus does the Almighty, by the angels that exert His power, wither the utmost efforts of puny man to frustrate His afore-announced judgments.

The literal sense of the passage thus fits exactly the divine predictions ; but here again it is necessary to know in detail the older prophecies to understand the final prophecies.

In this case also the judgment is but a repetition of earlier divine acts. The Nile, it would seem, must have fallen very low for seven years of famine to have visited Egypt. I have seen on the island of Seheli, in the Nile in upper Egypt, the rock inscription which records such a failure of the Nile for seven years. It is believed that this inscription dates from about the time of Joseph. Moreover, Bible history records the drying up of the Red Sea and of the Jordan for Israel to pass over ; and Bible prophecy foretells that "Jehovah shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and with His scorching wind shall He shake His hand over the River [as the following context shows, the Euphrates], and shall smite it into seven streams, and cause men to march over dry-shod. And there shall be a highway for the

remnant of His people, which shall remain, from Assyria ; like as there was for Israel in the day that he came out of the land of Egypt " (Is 11. 15, 16). This says explicitly that the event at the Euphrates is to be a repetition of the drying up of the Red Sea of old, which settles that it is the literal Euphrates and a literal drying up that are meant. Also, the event is not only that invaders may come against Babylon, but that the spared of Israel may not be hindered in their escape from that city and land before the judgments fall upon it.

(4) The passage cited from Dn (11. 44, 45) tells that this crisis at Babylon will make the Wild Beast more than usually savage, " and he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to make away many." In the course of this ferocious effort he will make his final attempt to exterminate the Jews : " he shall plant the tents of his palace [his royal pavilion] between the sea and the glorious holy mountain " (Zion). But the personal intervention of the Lord from heaven shall frustrate his schemes, and " he shall come to his end, and none shall help him."

The Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet will know that the final battle is at hand, and will mobilize their whole forces to resist the expected attack from heaven. For them, *all* will be at stake ; the issue is victory or damnation. To secure the resolute and united co-operation of all subordinate kings special measures of deception will be employed. John sees three spirits, which are demons, proceeding out of the mouth of each person of this trinity of evil. The picture is parallel to and explained by that of the deception exercised by a lying spirit upon Ahab, king of Israel, by which he was lured to his heaven-decreed doom. " Now, therefore," said Micaiah, the servant of the true God, " behold, Jehovah hath put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these thy prophets ; and Jehovah hath spoken evil concerning thee " (I Kn 22. 23). So now the time has come for the God-hating rulers and peoples of the earth to receive the judgment they have treasured up for themselves, and lying spirits, to which they have long listened willingly, now have power to seduce them to the fatal course of following the Trinity of Evil in open warfare against the Holy Trinity.

The spirits are pictured as going forth from the mouths of the chief conspirators against God. That is, it will be by persuasive speech that the kings will be deceived. Satan, the Dragon, being an invisible actor, it may be supposed that he will work then as hitherto, by thoughts and impulses injected into the minds of men. The Beast, being the political leader of the earth, may be

expected to dilate upon the outward national and universal disasters that will overwhelm them all should the Lamb prevail. The False Prophet may be supposed to employ the sanctions and incentives of religion to inflame their inveterate antagonism to the truth.

There must be reason why these demon deceivers are pictured as frogs. The only other references in Scripture to these creatures are in Ex 8, narrating the plague of frogs sent against the Egyptians, and in the psalms which refer to that judgment (78. 45 ; 105. 30). In Egypt the frog was worshipped as one of the most ancient symbols of the great Nature Goddess (*Speaker's Comm.*, vol. I, part I, p. 242, note 1 ; pp. 279, 280). The plague might therefore easily have meant to the Egyptians that this demon god was destroying them at the behest of Jehovah. This would render apt the symbol as used by John.

But R. H. Charles (*Revelation*, II, 47) points out that in the Zend religion of Persia frogs were regarded as the source of plagues and death, and as the agents of Ahriman. In that Zoroastrian philosophy Ahriman was "the principle of evil . . . the Destructive Spirit . . . the all-destroying Satan, the source of all evil in the world" (*Enc. Brit.*, ed. 14, art. Ahriman, v. I, 434). These conceptions exercised a wide and deep influence. "The worship of the Persian gods spread to Armenia and Cappadocia and over the whole of the Near East" (*Enc. Brit.*, ed. 14, art. Zoroaster, v. XXIII, 989 ; with ref. Strabo, XV, 3, 14 ; XI, 8, 4 ; 14. 76).

Cappadocia was the eastern province of Asia Minor, as "Asia" was the western. It is therefore probable that John and his readers knew well this symbolic meaning of "frogs," and would feel the force and fitness of its use to represent the demon servants of that "spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience, the old Serpent, the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole inhabited earth" (Eph 2. 2 : Rv 12. 9).

The exact epoch of this Bowl 6 is stated : it is when "the war of the great day of God, the Almighty" is impending. Jr 30. 27 mentions this day : "that day is great, so that none is like unto it : it is even the time of Jacob's trouble ; but he shall be saved out of it." The whole context is concerned with the era when Israel's captivity shall end ; when they shall possess their land, which the nation never yet has done since Nebuchadnezzar took violent possession of it ; when David their king shall be raised up unto them. It should be noted that what this passage means by "the time of Jacob's trouble" is *not* the Tribulation under the Beast, but the still more awful "day of

God." From this the great bulk of the nation, being apostate, will not escape (Zp : Zh 13. 8, 9); but the small and faithful remnant shall be "saved out of it." See our remarks on c. 7. 1-8, above.

Hs 1. 11 refers to the same day: "great shall be the day of Jezreel," even the day that shall issue in Judah and Israel, again one people under one head, becoming the accepted, regenerated people of God, His sons. It is here called the day of Jezreel. That city stands at the most central and strategic point of the area called in Rv 16 "Har Magedon." In the plain of Esdraelon the town of Megiddo commanded the pass that led southward to Sharon and the Philistine coastland. Jezreel stands further east, where the plain begins to slope down to the Jordan, and commands all that end of the great valley where the Beast will assemble his hosts. The plain took its name from the town, Esdraelon being the Graecized form of the Hebrew *Yizre'el*.

The head of the steep ascent that leads from Esdraelon up to Nazareth, 1600 feet above the sea, affords a wonderful and commanding prospect of the whole region. Far to the right, the west, is the Great Sea. Acre on the north edge guards the coast route northward to Tyre and Sidon. Opposite, the long Carmel range, with Haifa at the sea end, flanks for miles the southern edge of the plain. A few miles inland was Harosheth, Sisera's chariot city. Still further westward, on the southern side, where the high Carmel ridge slopes down to the plain, lay Megiddo, and not far from it, dominating the inland road to the south, was Taanach. Then came Jezreel, and at the foot of its valley, near to the Jordan, was Bethshan, overlooking the ford of the river whence attackers crossed from the east.

As the eye traversed this great plain, the mind traversed the vast stretches of its history. Here Joshua led his victorious army, and took Taanach and Megiddo (Jh 12. 21). But Israel failed to exterminate the Canaanites of that region (Jg 1. 27 ff), which led to Israel being later oppressed by them. Thus does the Christian become enslaved to the sin he tolerates. This brought on the great emancipating battle under Deborah and Barak (Jg 4 and 5). Later the Midianites swarmed over Jordan and ate up this most fertile country year after year. Then came the mighty victory under Gideon (Jg 6 to 8). It was in the same valley of Jezreel that the Philistines slew Saul and his sons, and fastened their corpses to the wall of Bethshan (I Sm 31). At Megiddo the pious, but unwise Josiah received his fatal wound while endeavouring to block the northward march of Pharaoh Necho (II Ch 35. 20-27). And in later times, over this plain, the

hosts of all the invaders and conquerors of Palestine have trampled and fought, and reddened its soil and streams with human blood.

It was deeply moving to watch in imagination these mighty and world-important struggles proceeding beneath the eye ; and still more moving to picture the boy Jesus standing on this same spot, near to His home, with the absorbing drama of His people's conflicts passing before His soul.

And our passage tells us that history will repeat itself, and that here will be marshalled the flower of the nations for the insane and fatal attempt to frustrate the angelic hosts led by the Lamb. It does not, however, appear that the battle will be fought here. It is on the mount of Olives, at Jerusalem, that the Lord of glory will plant His feet (Zh 14. 3, 4), and at a word of command from Him (the " sword that proceedeth out of His mouth " Rv 19. 15, 21), His mighty angels, that He has caused to come down thither, will destroy His enemies in the valley of Jehoshaphat, beneath Olivet ; for that is the " valley of decision " (Jl 3. 9-17), and there " He brake the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle, and showed Himself terrible to the kings of the earth " (Ps 76). Truly " the day of Jehovah is great and very terrible ; and who can abide it ? " (Jl 2. 11, 31 ; and see Zp 1. 14 and Ml 4. 5).

Verse 15. " Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest be walk naked, and they see his shame." " A Voice breaks the thread of the Seer's report : whose voice it is there is no need to explain ; comp. 3. 3, note. Its special appositeness in this context arises from the fact that the Seer has seen the gathering of the forces for the war of the Great Day begin " (Swete).

If the coming of our Lord as a thief is to take place at any time prior to the point now reached in the End Days its mention here is beyond explanation ; for the reminder would seem wholly irrelevant, the warning pointless, and the blessing beyond attainment. There can be no danger from an event already past. If the thief has come and gone the peril is already over and the loss sustained.

The source of the picture is not in doubt. It is taken from the Temple at Jerusalem. Edersheim in *The Temple, its Ministry and Services as they were at the time of Jesus Christ*, c. VII, " At Night in the Temple " (p. 112), remarks on the minute and accurate allusions of John to the details of the Temple services and arrangements, especially in the *Revelation*. On our verse he says (p. 120) : " During the night the ' Captain of the Temple '

made his rounds. On his approach the guards had to rise and salute him in a particular manner. Any guard found asleep when on duty was beaten, or his garments were set on fire—a punishment, as we know, actually awarded. Hence the admonition to us who, as it were, are here on Temple guard, ‘Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments.’”

The authority for this is the Mishnah, tractate Middoth (“measurements”), 1. 2, which Prof. H. Danby renders thus: “The officer of the Temple Mount [lit., ‘The man of the mountain of the house,’ i.e., the Captain of the Temple] used to go round to every watch with lighted torches before him, and if any watch did not stand up and say to him, ‘O, man of the mountain of the house, peace be to thee,’ and it was manifest that he was asleep, he would beat him with his staff, and he had the right to burn his raiment. And they would say, ‘What is the noise in the temple court?’ ‘The noise of some Levite that is being beaten and having his raiment burnt because he went to sleep during his watch.’ Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob said, ‘They once found my mother’s brother asleep and burnt his raiment’” (Danby, *The Mishnah*, p. 590).

This is the last of a series of passages where the same figure of the thief is used. The other places are :

(1) Lk 12. 39. It was employed by the Lord himself. “But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not have left his house to be dug through.” Peter (ver. 41) asked if this lesson was for themselves (the apostles) in particular, or for all. The Lord had just before addressed His remarks to the “little flock” to whom their Father was purposing to give the kingdom. Now, in answer to Peter, He makes a specific, not exclusive, application to the rulers (stewards) of His “house” in His absence (42 ff.). It thus appears that the “house” and its “stewards” will continue on earth until the Lord shall come after the manner of a thief, that is, until at least the seventh Bowl of Rv 16.

(2) I Th 5. 2. Paul has been instructing the saints that those who will be left alive on earth as far as to the parousia (presence) of the Lord (*εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν*), will not be removed to the air prior to the dead; for the Lord, at His descent from the throne of the Father to the air, will take away together all who are to share in that mighty movement. He then adds that they had no need of further instruction as to the times and seasons of that event, “for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord

so cometh as a thief in the night." Inasmuch as they were already enlightened upon this matter, and not in the darkness of the world about it, they need not be overtaken by that day as (to incorporate the figure used by Christ) a householder who did not know a thief was coming, or what hour he would come. God had not appointed them to meet His wrath in that day, but to obtain that salvation from its then outpouring of which the Lord Jesus had spoken: "He that endureth to the end [of the age], the same shall be saved," that is, from the wrath then to be outpoured (Mt 24. 13). Similarly Paul presses the need of watchfulness, sobriety, readiness, if that salvation is to be realized. His whole reasoning implies the presence of Christians on earth down to the day of the Lord, but their salvation from its sudden onset if they are sober and watchful.

(3) II Pt 3. 10, 11. Peter heard that instruction by Christ, and he repeats that "the day of the Lord will come as a thief," and therefore believers, even such as had already "obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pt 3. 1), ought to give diligence that they "may be found [at that day] in peace, without spot, and blameless in His sight" (II Pt 3. 14).

The heavy emphasis which the apostles put upon the *state* of the Christian does not agree with the teaching that our state has little to do with participation in the deliverance held forth as possible at that Day.

(4) Rv 3. 3. That the apostles understood aright both the privilege of escape and the peril of forfeiting it is certain from the fact that, speaking from heaven as the ascended Lord, the One who is to come, Christ said to the saints at Sardis, "Become (*γίνονται*) watchful . . . If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt in no wise (*οὐ μὴν*) know what hour I will come upon thee (or, *over* thee, or, *against* thee, *ἐπὶ σέν*)." This again emphasizes that the coming as a thief applies to the church of God, and forbids that the passage in Luke applies to pious Jews as such.

In the fact of things, saints living prior to the End Days have not been in personal danger of the Lord coming as a thief. Hence the real direct application of the warning must be to those who will be on earth as the Day of the Lord nears. This is important as showing the weightiest meaning of the Letters to the Churches.

If it be pressed that there must have been some application to the persons to whom Christ spoke in the days of His flesh, and to those to whom the Letters were first sent, as well as to all

succeeding generations of Christians, it should be considered whether the true implication be one usually little suspected. What if *dead* believers are required still to be alert, watchful, men of faith and godliness, living in that world unto God, as conditions precedent to sharing in the first resurrection, when the Lord will come suddenly upon His church? This would give continuous application of the words of God to believers, as well as continuity to the dealings of God with His children, and it would solve some hitherto obscure problems. More upon this theme is hinted in Scripture than is generally conceived. Unto God that world, dead to us, is a living world (Lk 20. 38), and He carries on the blessed work of perfecting His people "until the day of Jesus Christ" (Ph 1. 6). It does not stop at the hour when they die to this world. Why should it? Why should the intervening years be a blank? The whole theme sorely needs investigation and exposition. In OT *Sheol* is mentioned 65 times, and *Hades* ten times in NT. There must surely be here a great deal of information and instruction awaiting patient meditation and courageous explanation.

(5) Rv 16. 15. The sum of the foregoing is that (a) the house of God and its government, the family of God and its discipline, will continue on earth as far as to the Day of the Lord; (b) that, however, it is not appointed by God that Christians should experience its terrors, for He has graciously provided salvation from it by the method described in I Th 4. 13-18. But (c) it is only the watchful, prayerful, overcoming Christian who is guaranteed a share in that salvation. (d) Therefore the Lord, in great mercy, gives the faithful exhortations that are always connected with the theme of His coming as a thief. We are like unto night watchmen in the holy house of God. The Captain of that house gives no notice as to the hour when He will inspect the guard. The penalty of being caught asleep is to be stripped naked and be put to shame as an unfaithful guard. Hence the sentinel must keep awake through the whole of his watch in order that he may keep his garments.

Here it cannot be too plainly stated, or too heavily emphasized, that the believer's "garments" (plural) are NOT that righteousness of God which is reckoned to him upon faith in the Redeemer, which righteousness justifies him eternally from the *eternal* wrath due to sin. That righteousness *God* puts on the believer, that is, imputes it to him. I know not that that righteousness is ever described by the plural. But the believer's own "garments" are those habits, acts, and conduct which he *makes for himself*, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and puts on himself, or, alas, puts off

by backsliding of heart and ways. See Rm 13. 11-14 : Eph 4. 20-24 ; 6. 11-18 : Cl 3. 8-14.

That garment which can be “spotted by the flesh” (Jd 23), and must, by the care of the saint himself, be kept unspotted (Js 1. 27), obviously is not the righteousness of God in Christ, for this cannot be sullied. It is not *this* divine robe that saints may need to wash in the water of the word and whiten in the blood of the Lamb (Rv 7. 14). It must be other garments than this of which the Lord said that some in Sardis “did not defile their garments,” and that therefore “they shall walk about with Me in white ; for they are worthy” (Rv 3. 4). What are the flowing robes that the saint is to gather up above the filth of the paths of the world, and to fasten with his girdle of truth (I Pt 1. 13) ? The answer will come before us when we reach Rv 19. 7, 8 : “The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath *made herself* ready. And it was given unto her that she should *array herself* in fine linen, bright and pure : for the fine linen is the *righteous acts of the saints.*”

But if (to return to the former passage and its figure) by watchlessness and carelessness or wilfulness, the guard be caught asleep on the dusty ground, he will be stripped, his defiled life will be burned up, and he stand there in shame before his Lord at His unexpected presence (I Jn 2. 28). This is the evident force of Paul’s metaphor in I Cr 3. 15, that the character and life-work formed of poor materials shall be burned up in the day of Christ, though the believer “himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.”

The exact *modus operandi* by which this will be effected is veiled by the varied figures employed. Let obscurity deepen solemnity, that we may avoid the reality.

Bowl 7. The final Bowl is emptied out into the air, the realm of the world-rulers of this age of darkness under the prince of the authority of the air (Eph 6. 12 ; 2. 2). The secret instigators of rebellion against the Most High, the inspirers of false oracles and lying prophets, the organizers of Satan’s kingdom, are now to be overthrown and his rule to be suppressed.

This being effected, the voice of God Himself is heard from His throne, in the inner sanctuary, as He proclaims aloud, “It is done” . . . It has come to pass ! even all that necessary and terrible work of purifying the earth by the fire of judgment.

The thought of the deity himself speaking from within his secret place was not unknown among men. Herodotus (I. 159) narrates such an incident. A suppliant, named Aristodicus, misbehaving in the outer court of the shrine at Branchidae, “a

voice, it is said, came forth from the inner sanctuary, addressing Aristodicus in these words: 'Most impious of men, what is this this thou hast the face to do? Dost thou tear my suppliants [the birds nesting in the temple courts; comp. Ps 84. 3] from my temple? ''

It will be felt at once what added solemnity it gives to the utterance that on occasion the Almighty ceases to speak through prophets or even angels, and causes His own voice to be heard. Thus did the Father three times testify personally to the worth of His Son when on earth (Mt 3. 17; 17. 5; Jn 12. 28). And in these words, "It is done," can we not catch an accent of satisfaction, almost of relief, that His strange and reluctant work of judgment is now finished, and benevolence can have unrestrained course and gratification? Though Himself unseen amid the clouds and darkness of the place of His throne, He sees all that transpires without, to the utmost bounds of His universe, and He knows that the judgments of this great and terrible day are now completed. This declares definitely the point to which the visions have now reached.

C. 11. 19 shows two events: (1) the opening of the temple in heaven, and (2) lightnings, voices, thunders, and earthquake, and great hail. C. 15. 5 repeats the former, and c. 16. 18-21 repeats the latter. The Bowls come between. This is a clear instance of two features being set together which may, however, be separated by many intervening events detailed elsewhere.

In c. 16. 18-21 the details are amplified: "and there came [that is, after the Voice] I. lightnings (Ex 19. 16; Ps 18. 14; 97. 4); II. voices (4. 5; 8. 5; 11. 19); III. thunders (Ps 77. 18; Is 29. 6); IV an earthquake, particularized as the greatest ever known in human history. This is the more arresting since that first century A.D. had been marked by the number and severity of its earthquakes, and that locality (Asia Minor) was specially subject to them, as it still is. This emphasis challenges attention. Now eight centuries earlier, Isaiah (c. 29) had announced a desolation of Jerusalem (Ariel) by siege, issuing, however, in a very sudden destruction of the enemy, "it shall be at an instant suddenly" (ver. 5). As a result "the terrible one [Antichrist] is brought to nought" (ver. 20), and "Jacob shall not now be ashamed" (ver. 22), and Israel's blindness and ignorance shall give place to understanding and true knowledge (vs. 18, 24). The fruitfulness of the land also shall return.

Plainly this instant destruction of the Terrible One, while he is destroying Jerusalem, must be the same event described some

three centuries later in Zh 14. There also the siege and overthrow of the city are detailed (vs. 1, 2), followed by the sudden descent of Jehovah to Olivet (3, 4), with the instantaneous withering of the besieging army (12, 15), and the victories and restoration of Israel.

Now in both of these prophecies the deliverance is accompanied by earthquake. Is 29. 6 specifies thunder, earthquake, great noise, whirlwind, tempest, and the flame of devouring fire as attending the destruction of Ariel's foes. Zechariah particularizes the earthquake that shall split the Mount of Olives and cause a very great valley. John's vision enumerates lightnings, voices (Isaiah's "great noise"), thunders, and a great earthquake, by which "the great city was divided into three parts." This city is Jerusalem, for it is in contrast to the next following item that, through the earthquake, the "cities of the nations fell."

It would therefore seem that this mighty earthquake marks the moment of the descent of the Word of God to Olivet and the destruction of the Beast, events opened up in c. 19. Thus He will come first to the air during Bowl 6 as a thief, to remove the watchful of His servants, according to ver. 15; and then later, under Bowl 7, as the Lord of hosts, He will descend to Olivet to deliver the waiting and supplicating remnant of Israel (Jl 2. 15-18). The interval will take place during His Parousia, which will commence with the descent to the air (I Th 4. 16, 17), and will be continued by the descent to Olivet.

In dealing with figures of speech it is ever misleading to infer lessons from features not introduced by the writer or speaker. Because thieves often work at night it has been widely taught that the coming of Christ as a thief will be a secret event. But thieves do not work by night only; burglaries are not so infrequently perpetrated in broad daylight and in occupied houses. In such cases the secrecy of the theft results purely from the inalertness of the occupants. In Scripture the feature of secrecy is not stated or even implied. It is the uncertainty of *time* for which the figure is used. "If the master of the house had known in *what hour* the thief would come [whether it were by night or day] he would have watched": "ye know neither the *day* nor the *hour* when the Son of man cometh": "in *what hour* ye think not, etc." Our Lord stated plainly that power and great glory would attend His coming when He gathers His elect, and John has stated that "every eye shall see Him" (Mt 24. 30: Rv 1. 7), that is, the eye of every person who is awake at that moment.

The seventh Bowl concludes with a terrible storm of hail.

Swete gives the weight of each stone as from 108 to 130 pounds. Is 28. 2, 17 intimates such a hail in connection with the destruction of the apostates of Israel, who had entered into covenant with Death and Sheol, that is, with the resuscitated Beast of Rv 13. Is 30. 30 includes hail among the instruments of judgment at the period when "Jehovah shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm, with the indignation of His anger, and the flame of a devouring fire, with a blast and tempest and hailstones. For through the voice of Jehovah shall the Assyrian be broken in pieces." The Assyrian is Antichrist. Is 32. 15-20, also intimates this judgment by hail at the era when judgment and righteousness shall bring peace and security to Israel.

But again the solemn fact is declared that the hearts of sinners are by this time hardened beyond change. Men only continue to blaspheme God because of His judgments. What but a preparation for this is the already bitter complaint of many against Him for allowing wars, and yet more against His warning of eternal wrath to follow?

Again the drama has reached the end of this age, but, before the visible intervention of the Lord Jesus is further detailed, explanation will be made in a parenthesis as to the two brief former references to Babylon. C. 14. 8 will be expanded in c. 17, and c. 16. 19 in c. 18.

NOTE on the Parousia as a Period.

It is disputed whether the parousia of Christ will cover a period.

1. One view, strongly urged, is that the descent of the Lord from the throne to the air will be accomplished in one lightning-like, uninterrupted movement. On this view, the resurrection and rapture of the saints, an affair of a moment, as we know, will transport them to meet the Lord in the air and to join Him in that instantaneous descent to the earth. This is to be at the close of the reign of Antichrist.

A recent statement of this view is at p. 238 of *The Approaching Advent of Christ* by Mr. A. Reese. Upon the meaning of the words in I Th 4. 17, "to meet the Lord in the air," he quotes from Dr. John Lillie's *Lectures on the Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 267, 268, as follows: "There are only three other places in the NT where the phrase here translated 'to meet' occurs (*eis apantēsin*); and in all of them (Mt 25. 1, 6; Ac 28. 15) *the party met continues after the meeting to advance still in the direction in which he was moving previously.*" The italics are by Reese. The

conclusion drawn by Lillie and adopted by Reese is that the saints return at once with Christ to the earth, without interval between the meeting in the air and the continued movement to Olivet.

The ground given for the conclusion is inadequate. It is true that in two of the three places (not four; in Mt 25. 1 the corrected text has another form, *hupantēsin*) in NT those who met returned with the one met, but this is too narrow a basis on which to determine that it *must* mean the same in I Th 4. 17. No more should be said than that it *may* do so.

For the word does not in itself require this, nor does its root, the verb *apantao*. This comes twice in the NT, which L. and R. do not mention. In Mk 13. 14, "there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water . . . follow him"; the last words show that they were to accompany him, but without these words the verb would *not* indicate it. Thus in Lk 17. 12, "there met Jesus ten lepers," the context proves that they did *not* go on with Jesus but went elsewhere.

In the LXX *apantēsis* comes 25 times: in only 5 of these does the context suggest the idea in question. *Apantao* is found 21 times, and in only one place is this idea present. There is a cognate *apantē*, of the same meaning, found in the Alexandrine LXX. It comes 22 times, and only 5 carry this idea.

There is another cognate verb, of the same meaning, *sunantao*. In NT it is found 6 times. L and R do not notice it. Only two of these 6 places give the idea (Lk 22. 10: Ac 10. 25). Lk 9. 37 and Ac 10. 22 do not give it, and Hb 7. 1 and 10 negative it. Melchizedec met Abram but did *not* go with the latter on his way, as far as is shown. In LXX this verb comes 51 times, and only 3 of these places carry this idea. *Sunantēsis* is found once in the Textus Receptus, but is omitted by the modern texts (Mt 8. 34). The context shows the *exact opposite* of the idea: the Gadarenes met Jesus and besought Him to *depart* from them. In the LXX it comes 64 times, and in only 13 is this idea implied. *Sunantē*, the analogous form to *apantē*, comes thrice, and in each case this idea is plainly negated (I Kn 18. 16: II Kn 2. 15; 5. 26).

Hupantao is not found in LXX, but comes in NT 10 times, of which 2 places imply the idea. The cognate *hupantēsis* comes 3 times in NT, 2 places carrying this idea, as is the case in the only place in LXX.

In these enumerations places are reckoned as involving the idea of accompanying the person met even where this is only probable, but not asserted.

The total result of the usage in NT and LXX is: (1) that *hupantao* and *hupantēsis* come 14 times, of which one-third (5)

give the idea in question ; (2) of the 73 occurrences of *apantao*, *apantēsis*, and *apantē*, only one-fifth (15) carry the idea and four-fifths do not ; (3) as to *sunantao*, *sunantēsis*, and *sunantē*, of 125 places only one-seventh (18) give the idea. Approximately only 3 places in 17 contain it, 38 of 212 (if my figures are strictly correct).

Further, so far is the meaning from being implied in the words themselves, that they far more often have the *very opposite* suggestion. . For example, some 36 times they are used of meeting in war.

The prefixes do not alter the simple sense of their root *antao*, *to come opposite to, meet face to face*, the meeting being either hostile or friendly. Which of these it is, or what follows the meeting, must in each case be indicated in the context, this not being contained in the words themselves. In I Th 4. 17 the context gives no hint of what will follow the meeting of the Lord and His people in the air. This must be learned from any other scriptures that bear on the point. That the two other places in NT happen to carry the idea is too uncertain a basis for the inference, in view of the well-known variant usages of such common words. When the Thessalonians, being Greeks, read the word in Paul's letter they had not Matthew and Acts before them, but must have taken the word *apantēsis* in its simple indefinite sense of *to meet*, for with the context silent upon the point of what might follow the meeting they could not certainly determine that matter. What Paul then wrote to them gave no indication of what will follow the meeting, and is no proof that the saints will at once come on with Christ to the earth. Paul's purpose to comfort the heart (upon which Mr. Reese frequently lays stress as the limit of this passage) was served by the assurance that both the dead and the living would be "ever with the Lord." This will be equally true whether they return with Him to heaven to be presented to the Father, or for a period remain with Him in the air, or come with Him at once to the earth.

The settlement of this point will follow the exegesis of the *Revelation* ; it cannot be determined by *apantēsis* in I Th 4. 17.

The usage of these words corresponds to that of the English equivalents. *To meet* (*antao*), *to meet together* (*sunantao*), *to meet from different directions* (*apo-antao*) ; none of these English terms suggests what takes place at or after the meeting. This must be otherwise indicated. To say that because two English authors speak of persons meeting who then went on in the direction one of them was before taking, therefore a third author *must* mean this, would be unwarranted.

It has been urged to the contrary that when *One* author, the

Holy Spirit, uses a word three times only, and in two instances it bears a certain meaning from the context, it is a valid presumption that He uses it in the same sense in the third instance, even though the context be silent. To this it may be answered, that it would be a still more valid presumption that, as in two instances He defined the meaning of an indefinite word by its context, He would have done so in the third had He intended the same meaning. That He did not do so rather creates a presumption that the sense in question was *not* intended. But the objection assumes that I Th 4. 17 is a *third* use of the word, whereas in fact it was the *first* time it was used in a NT writing, this letter having preceded Matthew and Acts. That in the latter instances the sense in question is clear from the context makes it the more noticeable that the former time it was left unindicated, the word standing in its native indefiniteness. It could not have indicated to the first readers what is now read into the passage, and it cannot indicate it to us.

2. That the word *parousia* covers in itself not only the arrival of a person, but also the period of his stay, may be seen at Ph 1. 26 : " my *presence* with you " ; 2. 12 : " not as in my *presence* only " ; and II Pt 1. 16 : " the power and *presence* of our Lord Jesus Christ," i.e., His sojourn on earth in the flesh. See also my earlier remarks on " in the parousia " (p. 193f.). And see especially VNT under the word, and Deissmann LVO, ed. 4, 314, both showing plainly that the word included the *visit* as well as the arrival.

3. Some who see this last point have placed the commencement of the parousia before the End Times, thus making it to cover the whole period of Antichrist. Others have thought it to begin in the middle of the 70th week of Dn 9, and so have regarded it as lasting $3\frac{1}{2}$ years to the descent to Olivet. If our view above is correct, the period will commence with the descent to the air during Bowl 6 and extend to the descent to Olivet at the conclusion of Bowl 7 and the career of Antichrist. It will be long enough for the gathering together of the armies of " the kings of the whole inhabited earth " unto Palestine (16. 14, 16), and for the events detailed under Bowl 7.

CHAPTER XII

BABYLON THE GREAT

PART I—THE WOMAN ON THE BEAST

(Rv 17)

Verse 8 of Rv 14 mentioned an angel who announced, “ Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great, that hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” This angel was the second of a series ; and the third, who followed him (ver. 9), gave solemn warning against the worship of the Beast, and the comments were added (ver. 12) that at that time the saints would need patience, and (ver. 13) that a special blessing would attend their death. This sequence shows that the Babylon here intended would “ fall ” prior to the period when the Beast should demand worship and persecute all who refused it.

What Babylon this is was not then intimated, but c. 17 opens this up. It tells of a Woman styled “ Mystery Babylon the Great,” who at first rides upon, that is, dominates and is served by, the Beast, but is later destroyed by him to make way for his supreme authority (vs. 16, 17). Thus two chief personages have to be considered, the Beast and the Woman.

SECTION I. THE BEAST

(i) *His identity.* It is easy to identify the Beast with the one of c. 13, for (1) both have ten horns and seven heads (13. 1). (2) Blasphemy characterizes both (13. 1, 6). (3) The Dragon energizes the one (13. 2), and in 17. 3 the colour scarlet connects this Beast with the great red dragon of 12. 3, who also had seven heads and ten horns. (4) Both war against the Lamb and His people (13. 7, 8 ; 17. 14). (5) Both receive the wonder and worship of all on earth whose names are not in the book of life.

(ii) *The Period.* That the ten horns are already there when John sees the Woman indicates the period at which the vision will find fulfilment. They identify the Beast with the beast of Dn 7 with ten horns, amidst which horns the “ little horn,” Antichrist, arises, and who lives at the time when the saints are about to receive the kingdom (Dn 7. 23-28). These horns are the toes of

the image of Dn 2, the final stage of Gentile empire, upon which toes the Stone falls and destroys the image.

Thus the vision is of the final stage of the Woman, not of any lengthy preceding career she may conceivably have had. As the angel told Daniel that his vision of the four wild beasts (c. 7) had to do with the closing stage of Gentile dominion, even that a court of judgment should sit in heaven for the taking away and destruction of the dominion of the beast (Dn 7. 26), so John is told by the angel that he is about to see "the *judgment* of the great harlot." It was not a protracted history of the fourth Gentile power that Daniel then saw, but its overthrow : it is not a history of the whole course of the Woman that John sees, but only a hint of her origin, in Babylon, and a forecast of her overthrow at the end of this age.

As the vision opens the Beast is carrying the Woman ; as it closes she has been destroyed by him and the ten kings, and he is supreme. Thus it discloses one final phase of world affairs, that which issues in his ambition to rule as sole sovereign of the earth being realized.

(iii) *The Seven Heads*. It is explained that these have a double significance, which serves to show that symbols may have more than one meaning.

In the first place, they are seven mountains where the Woman had her seat in the days when the angel was speaking to John. To him and his first readers this could scarcely have any meaning other than the city of Rome. For many centuries there had been held there annually a festival known as the Septimontium (seven mounts) to celebrate the inclusion of the seven hills within the city wall. Rome was known everywhere as the City of the Seven Hills. In *The Two Babylons* (p. 2) Hislop cites in support of this Virgil, Propertius, Horace, Martial, and Symmachus. So at that time the Woman had her seat at Rome, but the name on her forehead proclaimed a secret connection with another city, Babylon, upon which more will be said later.

But the seven heads signified also seven kings. Of these five had fallen from that high estate. It does not say five had *died*, but had *fallen*. "To fall" may, of course, mean to die (I Cr 10. 8 : Hb 3. 17) ; but a king may die in honour and know no *fall* ; or he may *fall*, and not at that time die. This should weigh with those who *will* speculate as to who the five were. But why speculate ? John was not told how long prior to his day these five had reigned, nor what intervals of time had separated them, nor any other identifiable particulars, save that each had lost sovereignty by a "fall." It may be best to leave the matter there, since the detail

of their identity seems not material to the interpreting of the future aspect of the vision.

But one of this succession of seven was then reigning¹ and the seventh was to rule thereafter, but for a short while only ; but again how long thereafter was not specified.

NOTE ON *πέσαν* fell

As the basis for identifying the five Roman emperors it is asserted that "to fall" means here to have been murdered or to have committed suicide. But *pipto* does not involve this meaning. There seems no instance in secular Greek literature of its application to suicide or assassination.² Reliance is placed, however, upon the Septuagint, and the cases cited are those of Ehud (Jg 3. 25), Sisera (Jg 5. 27), both assassinated ; and Saul (II Sm 1. 19, 25, 27), a suicide. To these may be added Abner (II Sm 3. 34, 38), murdered ; the sons of Rizpah (II Sm 21. 9), executed ; and Sennacherib (Is 37. 7, 38), assassinated.

(i) These six instances are all that can be adduced, though the verb is used in the LXX some 335 times. In any case, therefore, the usage would be exceptional.

(ii) But it seems that the term in these instances means chiefly the posture or collapse of the body : "their lord was fallen *to the ground*" : "he fell *at her feet*" : "he fell *upon his sword*" : "they fell [*on the gallows*] all together" : "he shall fall *by the sword*." In the case of Saul, David applied the term equally to Jonathan, who was killed in the ordinary course of battle ("*how are the mighty fallen*"), so that it has here no special reference to suicide.

(iii) Further, if the histories did not show that these persons had committed suicide, or had been murdered, this could not be known from the use of the verb *to fall*. And this last is how Rv 17. 10, reads ; it says simply, "the five fell." No indication of the manner or effects of their fall being given, the passage is scarcely parallel with those cited.

Grimm's Lexicon, on the word in this verse, says, "to be removed from power by death." But even this goes beyond what is stated by the simple use of *fallen*. Cremer goes as far as is justified by placing this verse under the heading, "to come to ruin, to fail" [?fall], leaving the manner of the fall unstated.

The verb is employed in the very sense I have adopted in Es 6. 13 (LXX), where Haman's friends say to him, "thou shalt certainly fall before" Mordecai, meaning simply to fall from position and authority,

¹ Namely Domitian, if the generally accepted dating of the *Revelation* be adopted.

² The use of the word by Herodotus (iii. 35) to describe the death of a boy by an arrow, I do not regard as an exception to the statement in the text. For the boy was not assassinated nor even murdered, in the proper sense of the term. His death was by the wanton impulse of a madman, Cambyses the Persian, and his object was not at all to kill the boy, though that resulted, but merely to show that as he could shoot straight he was not out of his mind. Now the *intent* to kill is of the essence of murder or assassination.

since they could not foretell his speedy death, and least of all the manner of it.

Thus *pipto* here gives no means of identifying the five kings from the form of death of certain Roman emperors, nor does it of necessity imply the death of the five at the time each fell.

(iv) *The Eighth Head.* The material matter is that one of these seven is to be the eighth of this series of monarchs and the final head of Gentile world rule : the final ruler because he shall war against the Lamb at His coming, be overthrown, and be cast direct into perdition (19. 19-21).

The particulars given of the eighth king are :

1. He is one of the seven (11). From earliest times this has been rightly taken in the natural force of the words that the eighth is to be one of the seven revived to act again on this earth.

2. "He was," that is, had lived on earth at some time prior to the period when he is seen carrying the Woman. Some, however, take this "he was" to mean that he had lived prior to the time when John saw the vision and had it explained. In this case the eighth head must be one of the first five kings of the series. On the other hand, the angel did not say, "he is one of the five," but "one of the seven" (11), and there seems no reason for bringing in the sixth and seventh unless the eighth may be one of these.

3. "He is not," that is, at the exact time in the End Days when the Woman will first ride the Beast. When we consider presently who the Woman is it will be evident that in this our day she is not yet so riding the Beast. Indeed, the Beast in question is not yet here to be ridden. No political system answering to this vision is in existence. There is no ten-kingdom confederacy. But when this Confederacy shall have come, the Woman will gain dominant influence in it, and will do this before the eighth head shall have arisen. It is at that particular point of affairs that the words "he is not" will apply.

It is important to see that the term "beast" is used in prophecy now of an empire and now of its head, the emperor. Upon this Pember, dealing with Dn 7, has well said :

In the first answer [of the angel, ver. 17], the Beasts are described as Emperors ("these great beasts . . . are four *kings*"), while the second regards them as Empires. For, although it mentions only the Fourth, yet by the words, "The Fourth Beast shall be a Fourth Empire upon the earth," it manifestly implies that the other three were such before it. . . .

. . . the Beasts may stand either for the Empires or for their most characteristic Emperors. And this double use of the symbol is by

no means peculiar to our prophecy, but occurs in other passages also, and may be shown to rest upon a sound logical basis. The best instance of it, perhaps, is that which is found in the seventeenth chapter of the Apocalypse. For the Beast there depicted is a more detail revelation of the Fourth Beast of Daniel, and, so long as he represents an Empire, the Eighth Emperor is one of the seven heads revived. But the Beast himself is also said to be the Eighth Emperor, doubtless because that monarch, although properly set forth as one of the Heads, will be so perfect a representative of the Fourth Beast that he may be regarded as its embodiment.

A sufficient proof of the correctness of this view may be deduced from the vision which we are considering. For, in the eleventh verse, we read that because of the great words which the Horn spake, the Beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. That is, the Emperor will be so exact an exponent of the spirit of the people that the whole body politic will be held responsible, and be punished, for the blasphemous utterances of their leader. (*The Great Prophecies*, ed. 1941. 108, 109.)

4. "He is about to come up out of the abyss" (8).

The AV "bottomless pit," if it gives any idea that can be distinctly apprehended, is erroneous. It led the acute mind of the boy Spurgeon to puzzle his ministerial grandfather with the question, If the pit has no bottom, where do the people go when they fall out at the other end? That the abyss is not a "pit" at all is seen from the feature that, in the imagery of the *Revelation* (as in the classic poets), it is reached by means of a pit, that is, a shaft (11. 1). In two places the AV renders by "deep," which is as indefinite as the other is misleading.

The idea of the word is a vast, profound, unexplored region, and so in the Septuagint the common reference is to the then unexplored ocean depths. In the New Testament this region is located within the earth, and is the sphere of the dead: "Who shall descend into the abyss? that is, to bring Christ up from the dead" (Rm 10. 7). Where Christ was when dead is shown in Eph 4. 8-10: "Now this, He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth." It is a region which demons fear: "they entreated that He would not command them to depart into the abyss" (Lk 8. 31). Hence the alarmed cry of others of them: "Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Mt 8. 29). That such enemies of mankind are there confined may give a hint as to what the "locusts" are that issue thence when the pit leading from the abyss is opened, and these hordes rush forth to torment men, as in Rv 9. 1-11. Verse 11 there says that the abyss has an angel ruler, who will be in command of these demons when they are let out on this dread

errand of judgment. They know by experience what torment is, and how to inflict it. The passage suggests the solemn reflection that the torments of Hades have not altered or softened their natures.

Readers of the classics will know that these features of that hidden world were the ideas commonly held in John's day. They would cause no wonderment or question to his readers, who would take the statements in their natural sense, as describing ideas generally accepted. Asia Minor was then a Greek-speaking world, and the name of the angel of the abyss given by John, Apollyon, was akin to that of a principal Greek deity, Apollo, and one who inflicted on men the vengeance of heaven. Sudden deaths and deaths by plague were attributed to his arrows.

Our passage is an amplifying of the earlier statement in c. 11. 7, that the Beast who will kill the Two Witnesses at Jerusalem is to "come up out of the abyss." The only other use of the word in the New Testament is for the place where Satan is to be imprisoned for the thousand years of Christ's reign on earth (Rv 20. 1, 2).

All the places where the word occurs have been mentioned, and from them it is clear that the abyss is a *locality*, the region *inter alia* of the dead, and it is within the earth. This forbids the common suggestion that the "beast," as about to ascend from the abyss, means an empire, the Roman, and it is to be "revived." No *empire* is in the abyss or can emerge thence. The individual men that ever formed that empire are there, but as individuals. One of these can be brought thence, if God shall permit; but when it is said that the *empire* shall be revived to fulfil this passage, it must be asked which of the many myriads of persons that belonged to it, through many generations in the long centuries past, are thus to form it in its resurrected existence? And when it will be replied that this is not asserted, but only that the Roman empire will be re-formed at the end, composed of men then living, the answer is that this is not what the text states, that it merely avoids the plain sense of the term "coming up out of the abyss," and sets aside the fact that the abyss is a *place*, a place quite well known to Scripture and to the general thought of mankind by this name, and located in the heart of the earth.

It is here suggested that the angel ruler of this region is he who restrains the Lawless One of II Th 2, the "Beast" of the present passage, hindering him issuing thence before the time permitted by God. This may explain why Paul took for granted that converts from Greek heathendom would know of this Restrainer (II Th 2. 6).

That a person should return from the place of the dead to act

again in the affairs of the living, was no new idea in John's day, but one known to Scripture and by men in general. It is latent in the very conception of necromancy, the consulting of the dead ; and while most of what professes to be this is doubtless demonic fraud, yet the Old Testament had the instance of the coming up of the veritable Samuel to denounce the judgment of God to Saul (I Sm 28. 15). It is our Lord who shows that Dives took for granted that Lazarus could be sent up to warn living men, an idea the divine Teacher could scarcely have spread uncontradicted had He known it to be erroneous (Lk 16). And both Old and New Testaments unite to say that Messiah is a Man raised from the dead to rule the earth.

The common views of mankind had always agreed with this. This by itself would not establish the truth of the notion ; but when Scripture adopts without question an idea prevalent among men, that idea must be regarded as true, for the Word of God cannot endorse error.

From the most ancient times the Egyptians had conceived of the "victorious" dead being granted by the gods liberty to come and go in their former earth spheres. Thus in c. 11 of *The Book of the Dead* it is said of the dead Ani : "Osiris Ani shall come forth by day to do whatsoever he pleaseth upon the earth among the living ones." This notion of the departed having unrestricted liberty to return and act among the living we consider devoid of warrant in Scripture, for the case of Samuel was an exception : but our only concern is to establish that the idea in the words "come up out of the abyss" would be easily accepted in John's day. Egyptian conceptions were then widely spread, including in the Greek-speaking lands, and were in harmony with similar conceptions in the whole ancient world.

In keeping with this was the expectation, then held by many, that Nero was to return to the earth and rule again. This was adopted by many Christians as to be the fulfilment of our passage, which shows that they took the passage in its natural sense of the return of a dead man. That this idea gained rapid and wide credence, among pagans and Christians, is to be explained by the fact that it was but the application to a particular person (Nero) of a possibility owned generally. Upon this Mr. F. F. Bruce has kindly written as follows for this discussion :

Could any myths of pre-New Testament times have prepared men's minds for the thought of Antichrist returning from the abyss to reign over the earth ?

The origin of the belief in *Nero redivivus* was a refusal of the people of the Eastern Empire, with whom he was very popular, to

believe that he was really dead. [Nero committed suicide in A.D. 68.] (Compare the case of Kitchener in the last war.). Taking advantage of this, various Neronic pretenders appeared from time to time for twenty years after his death : the last apparently in A.D. 88. The idea took shape that he had gone to the Parthians, and that he would return at the head of a Parthian army to reclaim his empire. After that date it seemed hopeless to go on believing that he was still alive, and so that belief gave place to the idea that he was indeed dead, but would return to life.

(Compare the German belief about Friedrich Barbarossa [died A.D. 1190].

Der alte Barbarossa, der Kaiser Friederich,
 Im unterird'schen Schlosse hält er verzaubert sich.
 Er ist niemals gestorben, er lebt darin noch jetzt ;
 Er hat im Schloss verborgen zum Schlaf sich hingesetzt.
 Er hat hinab genommen des Reichen Herrlichkeit,
 Und wird einst wiederkommen mit ihr zu seiner Zeit.

[The ancient Barbarossa, the Kaiser Frederick, dwells
 In a subterranean castle, self-bound by mighty spells.
 He did not die as others, he lives there even yet ;
 In the castle he is hidden, to sleep himself has set.
 The glory of the empire he took down with him there,
 And, in his time, returning, that glory he will bear.]

It has been suggested in Germany that he *has* come again in the person of his present successor !)

So in the earlier Sibylline Oracles [perhaps A.D. 80-85], where Nero and Antichrist are identified, Nero is described as still alive ; in the later [perhaps A.D. 180] he is dead, and must be raised to life again as Antichrist.

There were several myths in the Near East which might have prepared people's minds for such a belief, most of them dealing with gods or demigods. But in the eastern Roman Empire the Emperor was generally regarded as a god, even in his lifetime. It would not have been a foreign idea, therefore, for the eastern empire to conceive of the divine Emperor as appearing on earth again.

The myths go back at least to Sumerian days [a very early period of history in Mesopotamia] ; Tammuz [see Ek 8. 14] was Sumerian originally, and the annual weeping which commemorated his death was followed by the rejoicing that celebrated his resurrection. The same resurrection story was told of Marduk, in Assyria, of Aleyn, son of Baal, in North Syria (according to ritual texts discovered at Ras Shamra), of Adonis, also in Syria, whence it spread over the Greek world after Alexander [died 323 B.C.] ; of Melkart (Baal) in Tyre (the Greeks identified him with their Heracles) ; of Attis in Phrygia and Tylon in Lydia ; of Dionysus in early Greece, and of Zeus in Crete. Indeed, the tomb of Zeus used to be pointed out in Crete, but the belief grew up that he had risen from the dead, and

afterwards, when he was accepted as king of the gods, it was denied that he ever died at all. Thus Epimenides the Cretan represents Minos, the son of Zeus, as addressing him thus :

“ They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one—the Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons ! But thou hast not died ; thou art risen and alive for ever ; for in thee we live and move and have our being.” (Cf. Tt 1. 12 : Ac 17. 28.)

Of the resurrection of human beings there are few traces. The only clear case I can think of is Alcestis, referred to by Milton in Sonnet XIX :

“ Methought I saw my late espoused Saint
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son* to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.”

There was also Eurydice, whom Orpheus almost succeeded in bringing back from Hades, but who was snatched back when he looked round to see if she were still following. The Athenians, fighting at Marathon in 490 B.C., believed they saw their city's ancient king Theseus fighting for them (cf. the angels of Mons). But these are few and uncertain as compared with the resurrection myths of divine or semi-divine beings, which form a background of thought against which it is not difficult to understand the readiness with which the idea of *Nero redivivus* was entertained when it was no longer possible to suppose him still alive.

Upon this last sentence it is to be remarked that the New Testament does not specify positively the *form* in which the eighth head will appear, whether in a properly human nature, with a mortal body, or otherwise. These factors may be considered.

(1) He receives a sword wound which ordinarily would have proved fatal, but which is healed (13. 3, 14). If the stroke killed him, this would imply an ordinary mortal body. But it would then not be an ordinary expression to say that the stroke was “healed,” meaning thereby resurrection from the dead. To be healed is to be preserved alive by the wound not proving fatal.

(2) When seized alive by the Lamb (19. 19-21) he and the false prophet are not killed¹ (in which particular they are expressly contrasted with their followers : “ the rest were killed ”), but they are “ cast alive into the lake of fire,” where they still are a thousand

* (Hercules.)

¹ The RV at II Th 2. 8 says that the Lord Jesus shall “ slay ” the Lawless One. The verb is *ἀναλίσκω* (*analisko*), and in NT is found in this place and Lk 9. 54 and Gl 5. 15 only. In the two latter places the RV renders by “ consume.” The variation throws the passage into conflict with Rv 19. 20. The word does not mean to kill, but to consume, and so in Greek was commonly employed of using up one's money. The Beast will be consumed, destroyed, without being killed physically.

years later. Now no mortal body could thus endure that fire, which suggests a non-mortal bodily nature.

(3) When Samuel came up he had a form and garment which Saul, from the description given by the witch, readily recognized as being that of Samuel. This suggests that the soul retains in the death state a psychical covering closely resembling the material body lost at death. May not Antichrist appear in *such* a form, like to his former mortal body? Also the normal resurrection body of our Lord bore visibly the marks of His wounds, and was recognizable by those who had known Him in the flesh. In resurrection the wicked dead *may* be similarly clothed, with one or other of these coverings.

In view of these considerations, whatever may prove the fact as to Antichrist, it is not required that we believe him to be properly *re-incarnated*, no plain suggestion being made of a body of flesh or being necessary to the case.

In such a psychical form it would be easy for the Satan-deceived earth-dwellers to regard the Beast as having become a demi-god, such as the heathen commonly regarded deified heroes, and thus he would be readily accepted when he sits in the temple of God at Jerusalem setting himself forth as God (II Th 2. 4).

5. The duration of his supremacy is forty-two months, three years and a half (Rv 13. 5), a time, times and half a time. This seems here to be marked as "one hour," meaning only a very short period in comparison to the ages of Satan's kingdom that culminate in this brief dazzle and eclipse. But the Beast's whole career, during which he fights his way to supremacy, will be much longer.

6. The ten kings who will exalt him to be their overlord (17) had formed their league before his rise, for it is among the ten horns that he first appears, as an eleventh and little horn (Dn 7. 8). It does not say that they had not reigned before they exalt the Beast, but that they had not come to their kingdom at *John's* date. Ver. 17 says, on the contrary, that "they give their *kingdom* unto the Beast," which therefore they must have held or they could not surrender it to him.

There *will* come an effective league of nations, and of nations that have descended from the fourth great kingdom of prophecy. This is certain; for it is in the mind of God that the Beast shall rise thus to world domination. It is part of the divine over-ruling of the wicked unto the accomplishing of the words of God.

7. The Beast and his kings shall enter deliberately upon a war against the Lamb. There will be avowed hostility to Him in this character of the Lamb. Already nations are deriding and decrying

Him because of this nature, as the One who displayed gentleness and silent self-surrender, permitting that He be led as a lamb to the slaughter. This is the very antithesis to that fierce, relentless, conscienceless spirit of ambition advocated by such as Nietzsche, and developed logically from the doctrine of Evolution that the weak *ought* to be crushed out for the betterment of the race. It was in England that this philosophical egg was laid and hatched, as to its modern form. The bird was reared to full growth and fierceness in Germany ; and in two bloody wars it has returned to its first nest to gorge upon the vitals of England. If organized religion must suffer with the rest from its ravages, it has only to mourn that its official leaders so largely petted and pampered this bird of prey because, forsooth, "Science" (falsely so called) praised its beauty and they could not endure to be thought "unscientific." Unless, indeed, some of them joined the atheistic in fostering it for the deliberate purpose of destroying christian faith.

Christ teaches the exact contrary to this cruel and false, yea, satanic doctrine. He says that all *real* improvement is reached by self-sacrifice, not by self-assertion. To-day this is widely and openly and violently repudiated by very many leaders and followers in different countries, which is a distinct muttering of the storm which the Wild-Beast will raise against the Lamb.

It is a notable spectacle this of a lamb faced by a huge wild beast, and of a little flock of sheep in the midst of a pack of wolves. But the Lamb will conquer ; the Wild Beast will fail. And in that day they shall share the triumph of the Lamb who are "with Him," who are on His side in the fight, are His followers ; who fight now by facing the wolf in the spirit of the lamb, suffering even unto death, as the Lamb of God did here. It is the meek that shall inherit the earth for which the wild beasts contend. To this suffering and this glory they were "called" (I Pt 2. 19-23 ; 5. 10) ; and from among the many of the called these were "chosen" (Mt 22. 14), were picked men, selected as those on whom the Lamb, their Leader, knew He could depend in the war that seemed often a defeat. They were "faithful," proved such by patience in suffering, in being unwearied in well-doing, in holding fast His word when the many disregarded it, in confessing His name when the vast majority scorned or hated it. These, and these only, have the promise of conquering with Him in His final and complete victory over the Beast and the Dragon.

Thus far the Beast. Every picture of him in Scripture leads to the same end, his collapse, disgrace, and doom, for "the words of God shall be accomplished" (17). And they who follow him

must share his judgment, as certainly as they who follow the Lamb shall share His glory.

See the prior discussion on c. 13.

SECTION II. THE WOMAN

1. THE FIGURE EMPLOYED. In *Revelation* the four Women stand for systems that in nature are religious, but also exercise *dominance*.

(i) "The woman Jezebel" (2. 20) was "teaching" and thereby "seducing," and she had gained so firm a seat that the church was submitting ("thou sufferest"). Thus had the actual Jezebel, whose name is given to her, been the determined propagator of heathen religion in Israel, and also had dominated her royal husband, the elders of Jezreel, and the people generally, so that even Elijah feared and fled (I Kn 17 to 21).

(ii) "The woman arrayed with the sun" (c. 12) represents the church of God, a spiritual system finally glorified and regnant; and of her

(iv) there is a second picture, "the wife of the Lamb," who is "to reign for ever and ever" (19. 7; 21. 9; 22. 5).

(iii) Similarly, this woman of c. 17 is a religious system, as will appear shortly, and she rides the political system and has a kingdom over kings.

2. HER LOCATION is threefold.

(i) *Geographically* she sat in John's day at Rome. See in the former Part, section (iii), The Seven Heads.

(ii) *Politically* she sits "by many waters" (1), that is, draws her riches from, and distributes her influence to, "many peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (15), as does a city placed at a confluence of rivers and seas. In Biblical times there were only two such cities: Babylon, during the first three empires of *Daniel*, and Rome in the New Testament period of the fourth. But at the end of Gentile world-sovereignty the centre will return to Babylon, and the historical cycle will be completed.

(iii) *Morally* she sits in a wilderness. This must be taken morally or it would conflict with her association with multitudes just mentioned. The moral condition is emphasized: She is herself a "great harlot" (1), a drunkard (6), and she seduces kings to commit fornication and makes them also drunk. The picture is taken from a brothel, splendid but filthy. Of such a fallen woman the influence is necessarily and wholly demoralizing; morality withers under her foul breath, and every life she touches she sears and scorches to a dry and thirsty land, where the water of life is unknown.

3. HER CHARACTER AND CONDUCT therefore are that of a HARLOT. A woman may fall from virtue so far as to fornicate with one man, yet may remain faithful to him ; but the harlot is the woman of the streets, eager to seduce to her side any and every man she can entice.

It is important that this Woman is not styled an adulteress. A harlot may not be this. She may never have been married, nor, in the possibility, have attracted a married man. The force of this is, that this Woman, this system of religion, is not regarded as having ever been "joined unto the Lord" and as having become unfaithful to Him. It is to be observed that "*Jezebel*" is not the *church*, but is only viewed as *in* the church. So here, this Harlot is not "Christianity," but a system itself wholly distinct from the church of God, though she falsely insinuated herself into the status of Christianity and utterly corrupted the outward aspect of it. In Rv 2. 22, it is not Jezebel who is said to commit adultery, for she was never the Lord's ; it is those who either are, or are ostensibly, His, by being members of His church, who are said to commit adultery with her : for a married man commits adultery by associating with a harlot.

The true church of God, the real believers, the spiritually regenerate, are regarded as separate from this vile system that masquerades as "christian." Even though from want of light some of them have been found in the system, yet, speaking broadly, the church of God has ever been formed of those who have been hated and destroyed by the Harlot the ages through. The Roman Catholic system is *not* the church of God, is *not* Christianity.

This is abundantly clear from the fact that the Harlot is positively intoxicated, has lost her senses, by drinking the blood of "the saints and the blood of the witnesses of Jesus." The picture suggests the horrid practice of cannibals drinking the blood of slaughtered foes and victims. Hence the Woman is not the church she so savagely destroys, but some other system.

There is a repetition to be noted. She is drunken "*with the blood* of the saints and *with the blood* of the witnesses of Jesus." If these two terms "saints" and "witnesses" mean only one class (as commentators assume) the repetition were without force and the clause should have read "the saints and (or, *even*) the witnesses of Jesus." There seems to be created a distinction between the two classes. Now in the present dispensation every witness of Jesus is a saint, in the New Testament sense ; so it would seem that the saints here contrasted must be the godly of former ages, before Jesus had come and confession of His name

could be the test applied by persecutors. This implies that the Woman existed before New Testament times, a material factor.

Of course, a married woman may lapse into adultery and fall thence into the deeper degradation of harlotry. This was the case of Israel as pictured in Jr 2. and Ek 16. But this Woman is a harlot only : Israel had been " married unto Jehovah " : she had never been so.

But Israel's case shows what is meant by " whoredom " and " abominations." The former was the resort of that nation unto political alliances for power and safety ; they depended upon Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon. Later, the Maccabees appealed to Rome against Syria. In our times Zionism turned first to the Sultan, then to the Kaiser, now to England in hope of securing their land and settled peace. For a people called to trust in their God this is national harlotry.

But a part of these unholy alliances was that Israel served the false and vice-loving gods of their pagan partners. That, said their God, is " this *abominable* thing that I hate " (Jr 44. 4). The idols were themselves " abominations," as were the vile practices associated with the worship of them. See these words in the Old Testament.

Likewise does this great Harlot of our chapter coquette with the kings of the earth, and make them drunk with the wine of her fornication. She both relies on them for power and she exercises authority over them : they in turn are seduced by her splendid but foul attractiveness and indulge in her vile worship of idols. It is shown plainly in various prophecies that actual idolatry will prevail among the nations in the End time. In that Day of Jehovah, when He " will arise to shake mightily the earth," then " the idols shall utterly pass away," for " In that day a man shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they made for him to worship, to the moles and to the bats " (Is 2). This whole passage is most illuminating. See also Ps 135. 14, 15 : the former verse showing that the time in view is that of Dt 32. 36, which it quotes, namely, that of Israel's final deliverance as a people. Is 19. 3, shows idolatry in Egypt at a period when Judah shall be a terror to Egypt (ver. 17), which it never yet has been, and when Egypt shall be brought to fear the God of Israel. That Egypt will have become an idolatrous land suggests that it will not then be under Mohammedan rulers. See also Zp 1. 4, 5 : Zb 10. 2 ; 13.

4. IDOLATRY WILL BE GENERAL ON EARTH, and the apostates of Israel will adopt it. Our passage shows (1) that this will be by the agency of this Harlot, and (2) by royal authority

in the lands ruled by the kings she seduces, intoxicates, and dominates.

This sad prospect should not seem unlikely. Great nations are being openly prepared for it. Russia has been indoctrinated with hero worship, in Lenin worship, with a mighty statue of that monster of cruelty. His embalmed body is an object of reverence in the Communist cult. Present leaders of Germany labour to inculcate reverence for the old Nordic gods of violence and vice, and yet more for the Führer. In principle, it is emperor worship. They cry : Give us boys to train as soldiers to further racial pride and ambition ; and they add that if these should be born out of wedlock it does not matter much. Japan is engaged in a deliberate policy of seducing Christians to worship at demon shrines and of suppressing violently those who stand fast in Christ. China and India are already pagan, and the masses of Central Africa remain so. Thus two-thirds of the world's population are or are becoming idolatrous, and Scripture hastens to literal fulfilment.

In the whole English-speaking world the *vast majority* have lapsed from religion, are de-Christianized. It is a short step thence to be paganized ; for pagan philosophy has already infected multitudes, and pagan morals and worship could be readily adopted here also should a day come when strong leaders urge it on the ground that empire well-being will be furthered by it. Only a mighty reassertion of the power of the Spirit of God through the gospel can ultimately avert it, and of this there is no *guarantee*, though may God in mercy grant it. Only God's good news ever overthrew paganism ; only the same can ever prevent a reverting to paganism. Let the godly gird up his loins like a man, let him arm himself with the mind of Christ to suffer in the flesh, and strengthen himself in the grace that is in Him ; and let him do this while liberty is his, or ever the Harlot shall mount the Beast.

5. HER ORIGIN AND CENTRE. For too many Protestant eyes the whole landscape has been filled by the Roman Catholic Church. Blurred vision resulted. Seeing only Her, she became to such expositors both Harlot and Beast, and Rome was Babylon. This is a manifest confusion, since she who rides the beast cannot be the beast she rides. Abigail on her ass is not also the ass (I Sm 25. 42).

That this Church reveals the form and features of the Harlot more than does any other system of to-day is true, and there is reason for it. As shown above (Sect. I, iii) Rome is the city of the seven hills : but then it was this before the Roman Catholic Church came into being. The prior pagan religion of Rome carried the features of this Harlot. Fascinating and dominating

emperors ; splendid in worship and riches and glory ; demoralizing rulers and masses ; bloodily persecuting the witnesses of Jesus—all this was to be seen when John saw his visions and for two centuries thereafter.

What took place in the age of Constantine the Great and his successors was that this pagan system of philosophy, worship, spirit, morals, and organization was imposed upon and accepted by that system of religion which in century four falsely arrogated to itself the name of the Church of God. Thus was this already degenerate system paganized, while paganism was christianized as to names and profession. This may be seen in impartial histories such as Bryce's *The Holy Roman Empire*, and in Hatch's *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*. It was elaborated and proved by Hislop in *The Two Babylons*, and may be seen further demonstrated by Pember in *Mystery Babylon the Great*.

Thus matters have continued to the present time, and the Roman Catholic Church in turn has displayed the form and features of the Harlot, with her pride, splendour, harlotry with kings, vice, demoralizing influence, and persecuting cruelty. But to see in the Woman no more than that Church is to be short-sighted, and our chapter itself forbids it. For

(i) The Woman was already in existence when John saw the vision, even as the angel explained : “ the Woman . . . hath a kingdom ” and “ sitteth on seven mountains ” (18. 9).

(ii) She is the “ mother ” of the harlots and abominations of the earth, that is, the originator of all false religions and idolatries. This the Roman Catholic Church is *not*, for they existed before she did.

(iii) She has a connection in a “ mystery,” that is, a secret connection with Babylon, and therefore is a system originally associated with that city.

This connection is established by the symbol “ having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and [even] the unclean things of her fornication,” for the same symbol had been applied to the city Babylon over 600 years earlier by Jeremiah (51. 7) : “ Babylon hath been a golden cup in Jehovah’s hand, that made all the earth drunken : the nations have drunk of her wine ; therefore the nations are mad.” In Jeremiah’s day the origin and spread of idolatry was comparatively modern history. All that archæology and philology have revealed of late, and no doubt much more, was then common knowledge, even the fact that idolatry (as outlined in Romans 1) had its origin in Babylon and spread thence to all parts as the races migrated.

The system introduced was a satanically crafty adaptation of the plans of God for the salvation and government of the human race. Far more as to those plans was known after the Flood than seems commonly supposed. The contemporary book of Job is proof of this. Satan instituted in advance his own depraved counterpart. He offered to men a human priest-king, a human priesthood, with sacrifices for propitiating demon deities, but substituting works for faith and efforts for grace as the way of salvation.

For the intellectual he provided philosophical speculations that blurred truth by commingling error with it, and so made philosophy a thief (Cl 2. 8) to rob man of true knowledge. For the æsthetic temperament there was an elaborate, sensuous, gorgeous ritual, so that worship in spirit and in truth died out. For the vulgar masses it was sufficient to offer priestly promises as to the hereafter, with freedom to live lustfully in this life. And all was skilfully arranged so that wealth, knowledge, power should be restricted as much as possible to the priestly caste, of which the sovereign was the Head, the king-priest.

Of this priestly order a College of Pontiffs resided at Babylon, and there continued until the Persian monarchs opposed it in the fifth century B.C. There is some ground for thinking that it then moved its headquarters to Pergamum in Asia Minor, and that Attalus I, the sovereign of that kingdom, became its head, the Pontifex Maximus. In 133 B.C., by the will of his descendant, Attalus III, the kingdom passed to the Romans, and thus the priest- kingship went to that city, and seems to have been first assumed by Julius Cæsar in 45 B.C.

Long before this, however, Roman paganism had come from Babylon. Before ever Rome was founded (about B.C. 750) a colony of Etruscans from Asia Minor had brought Babylonian idolatry to the region where the city was later built. This gave an initial direction and character to Roman religion. And in 204 B.C. the famous image of Cybele, the chief Babylonian goddess, which was said to have fallen from heaven (that is, was a meteorite, comp. Ac 19. 35), was taken from Pessinus in Asia Minor to Rome, and the worship of this Queen of Heaven and Mother of the Gods was formally incorporated into the Roman religion, and gave it a yet more evidently Babylonian character.

For the proofs of this descent, here only outlined, the reader must refer to Hislop and Pember. Our task is to examine into the final outcome at the close of the age, as forecast in the vision before us.

6. THE WOMAN'S FUTURE.

(i) Under Sect. I, ii, above, it has been shown that this vision is not a forecast of the history of the Woman, but of her judgment, that is, of the final stage of her history. The final stage of Gentile empire also is in view, for the ten kings are present from the start of the vision, and these are crushed when the Stone falls on the feet of the image (Dn 2). Therefore the time is shortly before the return of the Lord to rule the earth. It is therefore to be expected—

(ii) That the Harlot will dominate politics within the area of the ten kings. The latter will be again fascinated by her wealth, splendour, influence ; will adopt her abominations, that is, idolatries ; and will thereby be made drunk, that is, will become blinded to the true God and His faith and worship, as well as to the future as set forth in His Word. Thus will they be prepared to believe, a little later, “the lie,” and this “because they received not the love of the truth” while it was available (II Th 2. 10, 11) ; and thus will they be led on by the Deceiver of the whole inhabited earth until, under Antichrist, they fulfil Psalm 2 and break asunder God’s bands in open revolt.

(iii) Using the secular arm, thus again come fully under her control, the Harlot will persecute fiercely the witnesses of Jesus. She will intoxicate herself with their blood. The lust of persecution, or of any slaughter, has this effect. The raging beast loses all judgment and restraint and thus exposes itself to the attack of the hunter. It may be that the cruelties that the Harlot will inflict will disgust princes and people and be one impulse that will incite them shortly to destroy her, and to turn to the Beast in the hope of better days.

(iv) Her destruction thus results from her carnal policy of coquetting with, deluding, and dominating the secular power. It will be a concluding and conclusive proof of the evil of the alliance of church and state in the realm of fallen man. Unity of the two is the ideal ; but it can be realized only to profit when society is perfected under its perfect Priest-king, Christ the Lord, and His perfected government of priest-kings, the glorified saints.

The picture of the Woman’s destruction is ghastly : the ten kings “shall hate the Harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire” (16). A group of cannibals have been drinking themselves drunk with a woman with whom they have been gratifying their lust : then they turn upon her with a loathing such as seized the vicious Amnon against Tamar his victim (2 Sm 13. 15) ; they rush her to a lonely spot beyond help (“make her desolate”),

strip her naked, eat her flesh, and fling the bones and remnants into the fire round which they devour her.

It is thus the Bolsheviks have treated one branch of this great idolatrous Babylonian system, the Greek Orthodox Church in Russia ; nor can one be surprised who knows aught of the wickedness and cruelty of that vicious degraded Church. It was its high priests who incited the later Czars to persecute evangelical believers, and to banish to the rigours of Siberia those not slain. Priests of that Church, holding aloft the crucifix, led mobs to the pogroms of the Jews in South Russia. Of quite recent years it has been at the instigation of her high officials that the rulers of Roumania, Bulgaria, and Greece have passed repressive laws against various religious bodies other than that Church. It may be that the treatment these lands have since received is part of the divine answer to those wicked measures.

For the Anglican Church to have sought alliance with that apostate Church, as of late years, may have seemed a clever counter to the haughty attitude toward them of the Roman Church ; but such carnal policy can issue only in the present further depraving of Anglicanism, and for its preparation for absorption into the Harlot, with the consequent sharing of her last odious works and her final dreadful doom. Let the godly in the Anglican and other State Churches take note of whether they are drifting, and abandon the ship before it reaches the whirlpool. Otherwise they will partake of the sins and must receive of the plagues of the system. And let godly Nonconformists ponder the goal of affiliation with a State Church, the final outcome of that federating of denominations so much pressed of recent years.

How dismal is the prospect of fallen humanity ! But sin ever worketh death, which is as true of things corporate as of individuals. Yet those who fear God have the comforting assurance that the worst of men in the worst of times are made to serve His holy ends of justice. Yes, there *will* come a league of nations that will be effective ; and they will unite unconsciously to work out two judgments that God sees to be unavoidable : First, the destruction of this foul and cruel and idolatrous system of Babylon, that has given birth to all the daughter systems that have partaken of her nature and works, and so is actually the "Mother of the harlots and abominations of the earth." And secondly, these kings will give their authority unto the Beast, the Antichrist, so that the body politic, like the body religious, may be fully ripened for the long-deserved and long-announced wrath of God. Doing their own carnal will, they will nevertheless carry out what

God will put in their minds of His divine will, and when the wrath of man shall have thus praised Him, He will restrain its further activity.

SECTION III. SUBORDINATE QUESTIONS

Thus far the positive teaching of the Vision. But some subordinate, yet interesting, questions arise for investigation, and the answers to these, whatever they be, will afford some guide to the watchful as the days develop.

i. The Babylonian system of idolatry maintained its openly pagan style from its beginning, about 2300 B.C., through some twenty-seven centuries. Its Western branch, formed in the time of Constantine, has been nominally Christian for some fifteen centuries. Will it retain this latter feature to the end, or will it in due time become avowedly pagan? Expositors have tacitly assumed the former. In other words, what will be the religion of the fourth beast at its close under the ten kings? Will it be nominally Christian or avowedly pagan?

The great areas outside the primary dominions of the ten kings, as Germany, Russia, India, Japan, Africa, have been mentioned above as already pagan or becoming so. These, when brought under his sway, will easily accept the pagan emperor-worship of Antichrist, which will be the actual final stage of world-religion, as will also the apostate majority of Israel. But what of the ten kings just before he arises, which will be the period when the Harlot will dominate them?

For 400 years the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic lands have been the spheres where anti-Roman influences have prevailed. Now this is so only very nominally; and economically and politically they are to-day so impoverishing and enfeebling each other that, should this murderous strife be long-continued, they must at its end count less heavily in world affairs than formerly. This suits the Roman Church well, for it will leave the Catholic-pagan religion a freer hand to reassert its fell influence in at any rate Mediterranean lands and perhaps more widely. Relieved of the former political-Protestant opposition, its rulers may feel no strong inducement to retain even a nominal Christian character in dogma or form. Such ecclesiastics as that mediæval Pope who is said to have styled Christianity a "profitable farce," would feel no scruples about dropping the farce and avowing the pagan reality that has ever been inherent in the Roman system. The leaders of the Church have never hesitated to adopt *any* measure that might increase their political power. Disraeli, when writing

of "the oldest, most powerful and the most occult of the secret societies of Italy," the Madre Natura [Mother Nature], states that Cardinal de Medici was a member, and that "according to a tradition, which there is some documentary ground to accredit," when he ascended the throne [as Pope Leo X; A.D. 1513] "he took an early and no unwilling opportunity of submitting to the Conclave a proposition to consider whether it was not both expedient and practicable to return to the ancient faith for which their temples had been originally erected" (*Lothair*, 290; ed. Longmans 1875). I have not found confirmation of this, but the proposal, if it was made, may be revived and adopted.

To the passages cited above in Sect. 2 may be added Rv 9. 20. "And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk; and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." This makes clear that, as the end of this age nears, men will be irreclaimably devoted to the worship of demons and idols, and to the immoralities ever associated therewith.

On the other hand, the Vision itself offers no hint that the Harlot would ever become nominally christian. This emphasizes how little the long centuries of this age have to do with the vision, and seems to regard the period of her "christian" phase as a merely transitory matter. Her name is "Mystery Babylon the Great," which depicts her as being as Babylonian at the time of her judgment as when John knew her at Rome.

After the foregoing enquiry was penned the following confirmation was found in Pember's *The Church, The Churches, and the Mysteries* (500 ff. and *Mystery Babylon*, 123). It shows how easy is the transition from Romanism to Paganism, and that this has been long contemplated by Catholic teachers. Pember wrote in 1901:

It would be scarcely possible to select a more striking instance of unmistakable, though disguised, leaning towards Polytheistic Paganism than that which may be found in Dr. St. George Mivart's article on "The Continuity of Catholicism," which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* for January, 1900. Dr. Mivart wrote:

"I have heard a man devoted to the cause of Catholicity express himself as follows, when seeking the advice of a learned and austere priest :

" ' Monotheism, in the highest sense of that term, is, of course, an indisputable truth, but can it be entirely defended as popularly

understood? Newman has thrown some doubts on this matter . . . God's attributes, while distinct, are each of them equally God, and therefore substantial . . . But does not this really amount to Polytheism? And, indeed, we may well ask why may we not, in this way, attribute plurality to God? There are certainly some aspects and attributes of the Deity which may not be unfitly represented by such Pagan Gods—by Zeus, Athene, Ares, Aphrodite, Nemesis, Eros, Demeter, and Pan. In a sense, the Paganism of Greece and Rome was “true” and “righteous,” and the worship of the Heathen, as Cardinal Newman has said, “an acceptable service.” . . .

“‘ There are, to my knowledge, good Catholics who feel drawn to worship God directly . . . who would prefer to worship God under one of His attributes, symbolised by representations more resembling Athene or Apollo, and who have especially felt the want in Christianity of a female symbol of Divinity; for, of course, God is as much female as He is male. I have heard there are persons who go to the Brompton Oratory there to worship the Madonna, as the only available representative of Venus; and we have lately read of the recent worship (in France) of Isis, by persons who regarded the goddess, whose veil no man has drawn aside, as no inapt symbol of the inscrutable power that everywhere meets, yet everywhere escapes, our gaze as we seek to probe the mysteries of Nature.

“‘ In conclusion, I would ask whether it would be lawful for me, as a Catholic, to worship God as Zeus or Athene, if I am in truth devoutly moved so to adore Him.’

“‘ The answer,” says Dr. Mivart, “ given, in my hearing, by the learned and devout priest in question was as follows :

“‘ Most certainly it is lawful for you to do so, provided you find it helps you to advance in virtue and religion. But you must only do it privately: it would not at present be right for you to carry on a public worship of that kind.’

“‘ I myself subsequently asked the same question of three other learned and experienced priests, and received a similar reply from them all.’

From this is to be learned that (1) there is a distinct tendency among Catholic laymen to worship God under the guise of Pagan deities; (2) that four learned and experienced priests allowed this as proper; (3) that a Cardinal is cited in support; but (4) forty years ago the time was not fitting for it to be done openly.

Pember commented thus :

That good Catholics are often repelled by the images and symbols set before them for worship, we can well understand: that they should wish to exchange these objectionable objects for the images of Athene and Apollo emphasises the fact that Catholicism, the religion of the senses, is the road that leads back to Paganism. . . .

To feel the want in Christianity of a female symbol of Divinity is

to repudiate Christianity altogether, for the reason that it does not pander to the lusts and desires of the flesh. . . . Scripture forbids any such carnal idea as that of a female element in the Deity.

That many Catholics worship the Madonna as the only available representative of Venus has long been known to those who are interested in such matters. . . .

. . . it appears that a good Catholic may lawfully personify God's attributes, or what he chooses to regard as God's attributes, and worship them, severally, under the names of Pagan deities, provided only he does so in private ; for "at present" he must not recklessly cast off the veil in public.

But why this qualification "at present"? Is a time coming when it will be right to resume the worship of Zeus and Athene in public? And are there even now Pagan "Marranos"¹ in the Catholic Churches? Is it to such a goal that Romanism is leading us with its goddesses and saints, which, indeed, are all Pagan deities under false names?

2. A second question is, What may be the area ruled by the ten kings at the time the Harlot dominates them, and up to the time when they give their support to the Beast? In my work on *Daniel*, App. A, I have given reasons for thinking that the Anti-christ will, at his height, rule the whole world ; but the territories which he will acquire by early wars and by the ten kings exalting him will be local, though this will give to him sufficient power to extend his rule universally. We have seen to-day how other influences than conquest lead smaller nations to submit to the yoke of greater.

In c. 2 of that work I have argued that the territory of the fourth part of the image of c. 2 of *Daniel*, at the close of its career, cannot be now known by what it has been in the past ; that it will not be limited to what Rome ruled of old ; and will not include part of what she did formerly hold.

Treating, as I have done, all the four beasts of c. 7 as yet to arise from the Mediterranean Sea, these features are to be noted.

(i) The first, the lion-eagle beast, has its wings plucked. May not this be well fulfilled by that power being deprived of its fleet and air force, so crippling it from rapid movement? May not the way that Italy has just now (1941-1943) been thus crippled illustrate it? In my book I assumed, as others had done, that it is the second beast which thus defeats the first ; and the third, the second ; but it is not so stated. A power resident beyond the Mediterranean could fulfil what is predicted.

¹ Marranos. Spanish Jews of cent. 15 A.D., who, while in heart holding their Jewish faith, were baptized as Christians to avoid persecution. As used above the word means persons pagan at heart, yet parading as Christians.

(ii) The second beast, the bear, has devoured three countries just before it enters the scene, for the three ribs are still between its teeth.

(iii) The third beast, the leopard, has already four heads when it emerges, that is, four powers have combined before this beast joins in the strife, the tempest pictured as then raging in the Mediterranean. As there is no suggestion of conquest, probably the four have allied themselves mutually for protection and war.

(iv) Neither of the two last absorbs its predecessors, for when the fourth beast arises it tramples upon the three, and when itself is destroyed the three are still there and outlast it (Dn 7. 7, 12).

It were premature to express an opinion that the present turmoil in the Mediterranean is the strife foretold in Dn 7. But it may illustrate what that chapter taught. It foretold that a power with a wild and cruel spirit would arise in the Mediterranean and ravage ; but that, upon its ability for swift movement being broken, it would develop a decent, humane temper : "a man's heart was given unto it" ; and that it would cease to roam around on bloody enterprises and will "stand up on its feet as a man," and thus act in a limited sphere in a more rational spirit and manner.

There will next emerge a ponderous, slower acting power, like to a bear, which will ravage three lands, and will proceed to destroy much flesh. The bear seems an inappropriate figure for the hot-blooded, quick-thinking Latin races, and presumably they are not meant.

This will be followed by a four-kingdom confederacy, marked by the swiftness and cruelty of the leopard ; and then will come the final development of a ten-kingdom union, which will show a ferocity and terribleness previously unseen in all the dreadful periods of man's dread history.

This is the program outlined by the vision of Dn 7, whether its beginnings are with us or not ; and our immediate enquiry is as to the area and extent of the territory of this fourth beast at its start.

It is clear that this will not at first include the territories of the three former beasts, for it acquires these by conquest after it has risen from the Sea. When it has done so, then, next, the "little horn," the Antichrist, will arise within their area ("among them," Dn 7. 8). He will reduce three of the ten by war, and in due time will become the chosen emperor of the ten, according to Rv 17. 17. In App. C to *Daniel* I have suggested the possibility that his rise will be in Armenia.

It seems evident that the present bid for world-domination being made by Germany, and which has included the conquest of ten lands from Norway to the Mediterranean, and her absorption of four other lands, is not following the divinely revealed program as given above. Perhaps—I cannot say—it is preparing the way for it, but is not itself a feature shown in Scripture; for the holding of almost the whole of the northern coasts of the Mediterranean is not what the Scripture foretells. Many changes must come to fulfil Dn 7; which argues that the present German attempt will fail of *its* object, though it may bring on the object that *God* has before *Him*.

Still looking to the question of area, it is to be observed that Scripture contemplates both Abyssinia and Libya as coming under the direct authority of Antichrist at the time that he conquers the land of Egypt (Dn 11. 43; “The Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps”). I drew the attention of friends to this at the time when Italy conquered Abyssinia and extended her military preparations through Libya to the border of Egypt, expressing the view that her hold would not be permanent. The fact that Antichrist will have to annex these three lands implies that they also will not be part of the original area of the ten kings which he takes over by their consent. Thus these, as well as the lands of the first three beasts, do not fall within the first region of the ten kings, for all have to be acquired by war after the ten-horned beast has come on the scene.

It is further to be learned from Dn 11. 27, that, at the time there in view, Palestine will be an independent state, for Israel makes its own covenant with Antichrist. Also, the wars that he will wage with Egypt (the “king of the south”), according to c. 11 of Daniel, show that Egypt also will be then an independent power. Thus it would seem that the original territory of the ten kings, when he becomes their emperor, will not include Palestine or Egypt. Moreover, if I have rightly identified Antichrist with Gog (see App. C, mentioned), then as he will first extend his dominions by taking Persia and Mesopotamia (Ek 38. 5), it follows that these also do not at first belong to the ten kings.

Again, if the premises stated are correct, and Antichrist, who is to arise within the area of the ten, does so in Asia Minor, Syria, or Armenia (I put the case widely, though thinking it will be in Armenia), then the region of the ten kings will be the north-eastern area of the Mediterranean lands, and the three previous beasts, that the fourth will tread down, will be further west in the Mediterranean.

By the above process of thought the central area of the ten

kings becomes somewhat evident ; nor is anything said that need hinder them from drawing upon territories and resources to the north of the eastern Mediterranean, supposing that any power or powers of that region, not as yet having a footing on that Sea, may by the time in view have gained this, and join in this federation of ten. This subject I have treated in a note to c. 7 of *Daniel*, ed. 3.

From five to seven centuries B.C. the prophets of Israel had foretold the desolating of Egypt, Palestine, and Assyria (Mesopotamia). But Isaiah (c. 19) had also boldly declared the reviving of these three simultaneously, and that this would come at the period when God should be able to make them all a blessing in the midst of the earth. It does not need proof that this has never happened. Perhaps there is no more distinct and striking ground for believing that we are approaching the end of this age than that we have seen two of these three lands set up as independent states, and the third (Palestine) being steadily occupied by its former owners, the Jews. When the independence of Palestine as a sovereign state shall have been realized, then will Isaiah's forecast be well on the way to completion.

It is notable that God has used, and is using, only one power, Britain, to fulfil these His purposes and the predictions of them. It argues that there is still that in the attitude of this empire to Him which enables Him to use it. May this continue, or even increase ! But the fact that these three states are, at the last, to be able of themselves to make treaties and wars, suggests that by the time in view, whether near to-day or still remote, western over-lordship will have ceased. If this should mean that by then Britain will have withdrawn from the Mediterranean area, that may mean, or almost certainly must mean, that she will not be part of the four beasts whose awful doings and sufferings are pictured in Dn 7, and well may any kingdom regard such escape as a vast mercy from God. For though all lands must later, and for a brief time, yield to the pressure of the ten and submit to Antichrist, yet those further removed will escape the worst degree of trouble and of the divine judgments to be endured by the central parts of his empire. And perhaps it is in these remoter areas that the suffering witnesses of Jesus may find that measure of kindness foretold by Christ in the parable of the sheep and goats (Mt 25. 31-46).

It is not, however, to be expected that these outer lands will be "christian" at that period, for "darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples" (Is 60. 2). Thus those "sheep" who befriend the persecuted disciples of Christ will not be doing

this consciously as to Him, but will say to Him, " When saw we Thee afflicted ? " But He will receive them as having done it to Himself in the persons of His brethren, and such will enter into His kingdom of peace.

Any loss by a people of central and supreme authority on earth will at that time be seen to have been a blessing ; whereas those nations which will have won in the mad struggle for world-supremacy will have gained it only at fearful cost of cruelty and misery, and to their complete destruction at the coming of the Lord of the whole earth, the Stone from heaven which will crush the image to powder (Dn 2. 35, 44).

How different is the expectation, and how changed the desire, of the heart instructed by the prescient Word of God to that of the natural mind. But the former will see its God-wrought hopes fulfilled, while the latter will know only final disillusionment and disappointment. " Blessed are all they that wait for Him."

3. A third subordinate, but pregnant, enquiry is, Where will be the last centre of the Beast and the Woman ? In treating of the next chapter of *Revelation* we hope to show that it points to the actual city Babylon in Mesopotamia, and that this will be the capital of Antichrist, the world-centre of the last world-empire.

But will it be this to the ten kings prior to the rise of Antichrist, or only upon this becoming fact ? We think the latter, and that, though the city may have been built, it will not become the proud emporium described in c. 18 until Antichrist makes it his capital. If so, the Harlot must at first have her seat on the beast corporate at some other place, and only finally at Babylon. Some suggestion of this seems to be given in the vision of the Woman in the Ephah in Zh 5. Various expositors have connected this Woman with the one of Rv 17, and with warrant. The passage reads :

Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it ? And he said, This is the ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their appearance in all the land (and, behold, there was lifted up a talent [a round piece] of lead) ; and this is a woman sitting in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is Wickedness [Lawlessness] : and he cast her down into the midst of the ephah ; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold there came forth two women, and the wind was in their wings ; now they had wings like the wings of a stork ; and they lifted up the ephah between earth and heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah ? And he said unto me, To build her a house in the land of Shinar : and when it is prepared, she shall be set there in her own place.

(i) The ephah, being the largest Hebrew dry measure, seems a fitting symbol of commerce.

(ii) The woman is named Wickedness, and has been taken to symbolize corruption in commerce. But for this meaning, would not the figure of a *merchant* in the ephah have been more appropriate? In general, and in the East especially, woman are not usually found at the centre of the business world inspiring it with depravity.

In our vision of Rv 17 we have seen the figure "a woman" to represent a system dominantly religious. Only a short while before Zechariah's day both Jeremiah (c. 3) and Ezekiel (c. 16) had so spoken of Israel as the people of Jehovah. Therefore we take this Woman to picture a system of religion, yet one essentially commercial in spirit. Paganism, both Mother and Daughters, has ever been this. Its priesthoods have always traded their spiritual wares, selling for a price their benefits, temporal and eternal. This has marked equally the Church of Rome. Dr. Alexander Robertson, in *The Roman Catholic Church in Italy* (c. 5) tells that the Italians commonly spoke of that Church as "The Pope's shop." In Wolyn, Russia, while I was in a certain village, the Greek orthodox priest, though he was in the cemetery at the time, refused to bury an infant unless the extremely poor and widowed mother would sell her only cow to pay his fee, and so deprive herself and her little daughter of milk.

Thus has "Mystery Babylon" been able always to array herself in royal apparel of purple and scarlet and to deck herself with gold and precious stone and pearls (ver. 4). This will doubtless help her final ruin by provoking the greed of the ten kings and the Beast, themselves probably impoverished by the preceding wars.

Thus, too, is wholly obscured the blessed fact that God deals with the spiritual needs of men upon the principle of *grace* and that eternal life is a *free* gift.

At the time for the fulfilment of this vision the Woman will be divinely confirmed and fixed in this vicious moral state, practised willingly since national and religious life commenced at Babel: she is thrust down into the midst of the ephah and confined therein by the cover of lead. This will be parallel to the judicial hardening experienced by Pharaoh of old; seen also in Israel nationally (Is 6. 10: Lk 8. 10); and to be seen generally at the close of this age (2 Th 2. 8-11). These passages point to the same period as that in which the visions of Zechariah will be fulfilled, even when Jehovah shall choose Zion (1. 16, 17), shall be a wall of fire about it and the glory in the midst of it (2. 5), and the

Man that is the Branch shall build there the temple of Jehovah, and be priest upon His throne (6. 12, 13).

(iii) This Woman is stated plainly to belong to Shinar, that is, Babylonia, the very locality where the first general revolt against God was made by man after the Flood (Gn 11. 1-9), and where Nimrod commenced his career of violence and conquest, establishing a sovereignty without God (Gn 10. 8-10). Here Satan's false religion was started, and spread thence to all lands. To the Woman of the vision this Shinar is "her own place," and thither she is to return, when a house (meaning probably a temple, a house of worship) has been prepared (ver. 11).

The prophet sees two women come on the scene, having the wind in their wings, the latter being those of a stork. These women take up the ephah, with the first Woman therein, and carry her to Shinar. That is to say, two similar systems of religion will combine to transport the primary system back to Babylon. In this they will have demonic aid, the wind in their wings. Satan will energize the transfer. And because she and they are going back to the original home of their system their wings are those of a stork, for, as Pliny long since remarked, this bird, among migratory birds, is renowned for its habit of returning to its old nest (Smith's Bib. Dict., art. "Stork," Vol. iii. 1384).

(iv) But to come to the chief present matter. The standpoint of Zechariah's visions is his own country, Palestine. He was not in Shinar, for thither the Woman was to go. Of Rome he knew nothing, it being then, five centuries B.C., a town of no renown. It thus seems likely that, in the day the vision contemplates, the Woman's seat will be in Zechariah's land, Palestine. It has already a great Jesuit college in the centre of the new City. It has a gorgeous edifice in a reputed Garden of Gethsemane. It owns both ends of the Carmel range, has a place at the summit of Mount Tabor, and great buildings at Nazareth, and premises at and near Tiberias, and possibly has acquired more property since the present writer was last in that land, in 1935. The diminishing of the prestige and wealth of the Greek Church, since its collapse in Russia, has given to the Roman Church an advantage it knows how to use to the full.

The city of Rome is not shown in Scripture as the world-centre of the End Times, either political or religious. For too many writers, and of various schools, Rome has almost filled the landscape, historic and prophetic: in the Word of God she is named only, and then quite unavoidably, in the Gospel records of the life of Christ and in the accounts in the Acts of the spread of the gospel in her territories. In the whole of the prophecies,

of the New as of the Old Testaments, neither the city nor the empire is ever named. Expositors should have noticed, pondered, and followed this feature. In Babylon it was that the great Harlot commenced her career ; Babylonian in character she has continued ; to Babylon she will return, and in Babylon meet her doom.

This brings us to consider that city as depicted in Rv 18. But before passing to this subject it should be added that the matter of the headquarters of the Papacy shifting from Rome is not new. In Bernhard Menne's *The Case of Dr. Bruening* (10) it is said that after the Papal States had been taken over in 1870 by the new Italian government "a delegation of German bishops visited Bismarck to know the views of the Berlin government on the possibility of the Pope's being allowed to transfer his see to Germany." This idea has quite recently again been raised publicly. Since the above notes were written the following remarks appeared in the *Review of World Affairs* for October, 1941. On page 9 we read :

Fear [of trouble with the Italian government] only began to grow when the Fascist party began to steal youth from the Church. Now things have drifted to such a pass that if the Vatican does not take up a more strongly anti-Nazi attitude, it may lose the sympathy of many Catholics in Britain and America. If it does make a stronger stand, it may be driven from Europe. . . . On page 10 it is said : "If, on the other hand, the Pope chooses an activist policy [against Hitler] it means that a large number of nominal European Catholics will fall away as soon as things become too difficult, but that the sincere ones will create an opposition to Hitler of first importance. It might lead to the Pope being forced to leave Italy, and even Europe. English and American Catholics would thus gain an influence they have never had before. If this happened, it is quite certain that at the end of the war they would never agree to the Italian clergy returning to the dominant position they have long held in the councils of the Church. For example, at present there is only one English Cardinal ; the United States has only four. Italy has thirty-nine.

Whatever the outcome of the crisis through which the Roman Church is passing, it seems certain that it will bring far-reaching changes—much greater than any through which it has yet passed in its long history.

Nor is it only non-Catholic minds that are facing this possibility of the Church leaving Italy. The subject was plainly discussed in *The Catholic Herald* for October 10, 1941. The writer there also contemplates that the expected new centre of the Papacy will be in the English-speaking world, and suggests Eire as the

most suitable land. He quotes from *The Vatican and the War in Europe*, by Dr. Denis Gwynn, as follows : "One aspect of the recent pontificates which has escaped general notice is the rapid decline of the importance of Europe in relation to the government of the Church. . . . It is impossible, I believe, to regard this development as being unrelated to the decline of Europe in the last war. . . . The Holy See remains, as it always must remain, the supreme and sovereign head of the Church in all the world. But the Holy See has inevitably become less identified with Europe, and particularly with Italy."

The writer, Mr. Stanley B. James, adds that "In dealing with the times of Benedict XV [Pope A.D. 1914-1922], Dr. Gwynn remarks that the Pope, observing the wreckage of European civilization, 'had to face a situation in which even the central direction of the Church might have to be transferred urgently elsewhere.' Since that sentence was written, the dangers of the situation have increased."

That Catholic writers, and a Catholic magazine, openly discuss and advocate such removal of the Papacy from Rome, suggests that the higher authorities of the Church are not averse to the idea being ventilated. But if when the event comes the first move should be westward, we are of opinion that would be only for a time, seeing that the Word of God, as we think, points to first Palestine and finally Babylon as the closing centres of the system.

If this trend of opinion prove warranted by events it will be seen how unwarranted has been that line of exposition of prophecy which has made the city of Rome the centre of politics and religion to the close of the age.

We proceed to c. 18.

PART II--THE CITY BABYLON

(Rv 18)

Does this chapter point to a literal city Babylon, in Mesopotamia, or is the scene symbolic of something else?

Examining eighteen commentaries it is to find that three regard it as symbolic of Commercialism. "It represents the world, of course . . . Business . . . a spiritual Babylon"; "a commercial system . . . nothing else"; "this symbolic city" (of Commercialism).

Two writers treat it as symbolic of world-religion and world-politics in combination.

But nine are certain that Rome is meant: some say Rome

pagan, some Rome papal, some pagan and papal. And a great array of Reformers could be added to this effect. Others treat it as a widespread system of religious corruption with its centre at Rome.

A foreigner, struggling with the terrible irregularities of English pronunciation, wrote home : “ They *write* Jerusalem, but they *say* Constantinople.” Somewhat so here : God *says* “ the great *city* Babylon, the strong *city*,” and again, “ Babylon the great *city*” (12. 21) ; but He *means* something else, say the commentators. Why He should not here mean what He says is not evident, for there is not a word in the chapter that *cannot* apply to an actual city or its inhabitants ; nor is there a statement that does not apply to the well-known Babylon in particular : but it cannot possibly mean this, because, forsooth, a commentator has assured us that “ we are not to look for a city named Babylon to fulfil the prophecy.” But *why* not ?

Most mercifully, however, if we venture to believe that the passage does mean what it says, even the veritable Babylon the great, we shall not be wholly alone, for at least four respectable writers, formerly of some note in prophetic study, will keep us in countenance, namely, B. W. Newton, R. Govett, J. A. Seiss, and G. H. Pember.

Let us, then examine for ourselves, seeking ever the aid of the Spirit of truth.

SECTION I. FOUR DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE CHAPTERS

i. If the two chapters (17 and 18) refer to but one thing or system, why did not the same angel who showed and explained the former continue the subject to its close ? Why did a different angel mediate the second half of the announcement, if it was all one ? Also, why is the second vision stated distinctly to be a subsequent vision ? And why was the new messenger one of exceptional authority and splendour ? “ After these things [those of c. 17] I saw another ($\ddot{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\oslash$) angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority ; and the earth was lightened with his glory.”

Thus the opening statement particularizes four distinctions between this scene and that of c. 17.

(a) In the latter the angel was already at hand to the earth, having just poured on it his bowl of judgment : in the eighteenth chapter the angel comes direct from heaven for this announcement.

(b) He is a different messenger, which suggests a different message and subject.

(c) His superior authority and glory suggest a yet more

momentous and terrific judgment, distinguishing it from that just before described.

(d) The theme is disconnected from what went before by being given "after these" former things. In the two earlier places in this book where the phrase "after these things I saw" is found, a new subject is introduced, not the former subject amplified (4. 7; 7. 1).

2. Upon the fall of this Babylon it becomes the habitation of demons and the prison ($\phi\upsilon\lambda\alpha\kappa\eta$) of unclean spirits and birds. When the other Babylon fell she simply ceased to exist, by being burnt utterly with fire (17. 16). Of nothing, nothing can be affirmed: a "woman" when "burnt utterly" simply ceases to be, as to life on earth. But when a city is burnt utterly (18. 18) its site remains and can be inhabited.

3. The former system was Babylon in a mystery; there was a secret association between it and the city. In this chapter there is no secret connection. This Babylon is described repeatedly as a city: it is "Babylon the great" (2), a plain echo of the words of Nebuchadnezzar about his actual city, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built?" (Dn 4. 30). More particularly it is "the great city, Babylon, the strong city" (10); and again "the great city . . . what city is like the great city? . . . Woe, woe, the great city . . ."; and finally "Babylon, the great city" (16, 18, 19, 21).

Thus is her name Babylon given thrice, and six or seven times it is specified that it is a city that is in view. In the former vision the name is given only once, and then as only secretly or morally belonging to the Woman.

4. The vast array of details from ver. 11 to ver. 23, so extensive and minute, apply simply and obviously to the life of a literal city. It would require both the ability and leisure of an interpreting angel to give them even the semblance of application to a "system" of any sort. But no angel would attempt the task; or, at least, no angel has attempted it. It demands the unique qualities of a commentator.

Not till these seven considerations are eliminated can the theme of the two chapters be the same.

SECTION II. FOUR CONTRASTS BETWEEN THE CHAPTERS

1. C. 14. 8 announced a fall of Babylon the great as the second chief item in the End Times, and prior to the period when the Beast should persecute the saints (14. 9-13). C. 17. 16, 17 shows this judgment as taking place before the Beast is exalted

by the ten kings and in order that he may be so, and thus before his general persecution of the godly.

But c. 16 describes him as already in power, his image being worshipped (2), his throne standing and his kingdom existing (10), and the last great battle against God as passed (17, "It is done," completed). And then is announced a further judgment upon Babylon the great: "Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath" (19).

Thus one Babylon is destroyed by the Beast before his universal sovereignty, and another Babylon is judged after he himself has been overthrown. C. 14. 8, is expanded in c. 17; c. 16. 19 in c. 18. The merging of c. 17 and 18 destroys this parallel and causes inextricable confusion.

2. In 17. 16 the ten kings hate and destroy the Woman; in 18. 9 the same kings of the earth bewail the destruction of the city. The two terms describe the same persons, for in 19. 19 the kings confederate with the Beast at Har Magedon are again styled "the kings of the earth," which term must therefore at least include the ten kings. Is 24. 21, referring to the same judgment, uses of them the same title: "Jehovah will punish . . . the kings of the earth upon the earth."

3. When the kings have killed the Woman they then "eat her flesh," that is, enrich themselves from her: but when the city is suddenly and utterly overthrown, as a stone cast into the sea (18. 21), nothing is left for anyone to seize, which is what causes the merchants to wail (17. 19).

4. The Woman is destroyed by a process: she is hated, isolated, stripped, devoured, burned. Considering the extensive area, power, and resources of the system in view, this process cannot be completed in a brief space of time. It took the Bolsheviks an appreciable period to liquidate the Greek Orthodox Church, even incompletely; and that Church is only a small part of the Woman as she will yet be.

But the City is to be annihilated suddenly: "in one day" (8); yea, "in one hour" (19); yea, as suddenly as when a stone is flung into water "*thus* shall Babylon be cast down" (21).

Not till these four contrasts are obliterated can the two chapters have the same subject.

SECTION III. THE RELATION OF THE CHAPTER TO OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

There is manifest and intimate connection between this chapter

and the Old Testament prophecies concerning Babylon. These are given in cs. 13, 14, 47, and 48 of Isaiah, and 50 and 51 of Jeremiah. That they refer to the literal city is undoubted. Concerning the destruction of the city therein threatened, Is 13 and 14 yield these features :

1. It is to take place in "the day of the Jehovah" (13. 6, 9).
2. It is at the time that there will be a mighty disturbance of the sun, moon, and stars (13. 10, 13). This is referred to by Christ (Mt 24. 29, 30) as to follow the final tribulation of this present age and immediately to precede His return. In Rv 6. 12-17 it is again set at that coming period, even in the great day of the wrath of God and the Lamb. As shown in II. 1 above, the New Testament also foretells a destruction of Babylon at that same epoch (16. 19). Therefore Isaiah was not foretelling any destruction of Babylon that might come before the day of Jehovah, and therefore there must be a Babylon to be destroyed in that coming day.
3. This is confirmed by Isaiah in that he puts the judgment announced at the time when Jehovah shall finally restore Israel to favour and power (14. 1-8). Jeremiah also places it in connection with Israel and Judah returning together unto Jehovah and making with Him "an everlasting covenant which shall not be forgotten" (Jr 50. 4. 5 ; Comp. 32, 37-41 : Ek 36. 22-38 ; 37. 15-23).
4. Obviously no sort of a fulfilment of these predictions took place when Cyrus captured Babylon in 539-8 B.C. And one other detail puts this beyond dispute. Is 14. 24-29 shows that, at the time that his city is to be destroyed, its monarch, the Assyrian, is to be destroyed, not at Babylon, but on the mountains of Israel. But when Cyrus took Babylon, its king, Belshazzar, was slain in the city (Dn 5. 30).
5. There is a further detail, perhaps seldom noticed. Just previously in the prophecy (Is 10. 5, 12) the Assyrian has been mentioned as that final assailant of Israel who shall be destroyed in Palestine by the Lord at His return. Then in cs. 13 and 14 follows the announcement of the overthrow of his capital Babylon. But from Jr 50. 43 and 51. 31 it is seen that a "king" of Babylon will be there at the time the city is captured by the Medes : "one post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken on every quarter." This cannot be the capture by Cyrus because, so far was the city from then being taken from every quarter simultaneously, that it was some time before the news of the capture reached the central areas (Her I. 191).

It would seem therefore that, as of old, Nabonidus was emperor

and had Belshazzar as deputy king at the capital, and as later Cyrus ruled the whole Persian empire and appointed Darius over the newly acquired Babylonian kingdom (Dn 5. 30; 6. 1), so will the last world-emperor have a deputy sovereign at the capital. The Emperor will perish in Palestine, the king at Babylon. This also awaits fulfilment.

6. Yet again: it is stated repeatedly that the *destruction* of the city is to be effected by the kings of the *Medes*: “Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them” (Is 13. 17): “Jehovah hath stirred up the spirit of the kings of the *Medes*: because His purpose is against Babylon to destroy it” (Jr 51. 11, 28). Now apart from the facts that Cyrus was not a Mede but a Persian (Ez 1. 1: Dn 6. 28), and that he had just abolished the sovereignty of the Medes, it is also the fact that neither he, nor the later rulers of his dynasty, destroyed the city. See para. 9 below.

7. The overthrow of Babylon in question is to be part of, and at the time of, a general and universal judgment that will affect both the heavens and the earth: “I will punish the *world* for their evil. . . . I will make the heavens to tremble, and the earth shall be shaken out of its place” (Is 13. 11, 13). “This is the purpose that is purposed upon the *whole earth*; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon *all* the nations” (Is 14. 26). This feature has never had fulfilment.

8. The overthrow predicted is to be sudden, as that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Is 14. 19). This Jeremiah emphasized by directing that the roll, which he sent to be read to the Jews at Babylon, was to be fastened to a stone and “cast into the midst of Euphrates,” while the messenger proclaimed, “*Thus* shall Babylon sink and shall not rise again” (51, 63, 64). This powerful picture the angel repeated before John, by flinging a great millstone into the sea, and saying, “*Thus* with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all” (Rv 18. 21).

It appears probable that there will be a capture and sack of the city by the Medes and associated peoples (Jr 51. 27) while the Emperor is on a campaign against Egypt (Dn 11. 44; “tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him”); and that a little later the full and final judgment of the city will take place by earthquake. Thus will she receive at the hands of man exactly the same miseries that her armies had often inflicted upon other cities, and then the hand of God will complete His wrath and retribution by instant and complete engulfment. So shall be “rendered unto her even as she rendered, and doubled unto her the double according to her works” (Rv 18. 6).

It is evident that Jeremiah's prediction was still awaiting fulfilment in the days of John, and certainly no such sudden and final catastrophe has ever overtaken Babylon.

9. This introduces the further prediction that the overthrow shall prove final and irrecoverable: "It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation" (Is 13. 20). Jeremiah solemnly enforced this by telling the messenger, Seraiah, to address these words to God himself: "O Jehovah, thou hast spoken concerning this place to cut it off, that none shall dwell therein, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever" (Jr 51. 62).

Concerning most of the lands around Palestine the promise is found that their captivity shall be brought back in the latter days; but Edom and Babylon are expressly excluded from this promised restoration (Jr 49. 17, 18).

So far is this prediction concerning Babylon from having been fulfilled that it can be shown from history that the site has never yet been uninhabited, even as it never yet has endured a sudden destruction.

No such calamity overtook it at the capture by Cyrus. It suffered no injury, but he rather beautified it and made it his capital. See Budge, *Babylonian Life and History*, ed. 2, 55-57, quoting the cylinder of Cyrus, Br. Mus. No. 12,049; and Herodotus, Book III, 159, who states distinctly that when Cyrus took the city he neither destroyed the wall nor tore down the gates.

In 516 B.C. Darius Hystaspes, suppressing a revolt, injured the outer walls and pulled down the gates, but otherwise consulted for the welfare of the city.

478 B.C. Xerxes plundered the great temple of Bel.

331 B.C. Alexander the Great was welcomed into the city, and proposed to rebuild the temple, but his death prevented.

293 B.C. Seleucus built Seleucia as his capital, whereupon Babylon gradually fell into decay.

Strabo, who died A.D. 25, is cited in proof that by his time no city was left, and that so the prediction before us had reached its fulfilment. This is an instance of how easily lax quotation or assertion may falsify both an author and an issue, which, being once done, other writers too easily follow suit. What Strabo says is: "And now indeed [Seleucia] has become greater than Babylon, which for the most part has become deserted" ($\eta\delta'\epsilon\rho\eta\mu\sigma\eta\pi\omega\lambda\eta\eta$). Also in the time of Augustus, which was Strabo's time, some Jews still lingered there; and only a little later Pliny the elder said that the temple of Belus was standing in his day. A little later again the emperor Trajan visited at

Babylon the house in which Alexander died, and performed religious ceremonies there. And about the same time, early in the second century, the Parthian king, Evemerus, sent numerous families thence into slavery in Media, and burned many great and beautiful edifices still standing. Again, a little later Pausanias, who wrote about A.D. 174, says that a few Chaldeans continued to dwell there. See Layard, *Nineveh and Babylon*, c. xxiii, where references are given to the authorities above cited.

About the middle of the fifth century Theodoret speaks of the city as being then inhabited only by a few Jews. Perhaps he somewhat exaggerated its desolation, for "the Rabbis of that period knew it as a city. Mention is made of baskets taken to Babylon (B.B. 22a), as also of the fact that one could live as well in Babylon as in Sura (Git. 65a)." Sura was the town in Babylonia whence the Babylonian Talmud was issued at the close of that century five A.D., and the Talmud itself speaks of the "bridge near Babylon." These quotations are from *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, vol. ii, p. 400, art. "Babylon," by Prof. S. Krauss.

In A.D. 917 Ibn Haukal mentions Babylon as an insignificant village; but it was still there.

About A.D. 1100 it seems to have again grown into a town of some importance, for it was then known as the Two Mosques. And shortly afterwards it was enlarged and fortified, and received the name of Hillah, or rest, which it retains to the present day.

In A.D. 1585 Bishop Otto of Freisingen published a history and said: "That portion of ancient Babylon which is still occupied is—as we have heard from persons of character from beyond sea—styled Baldach, whilst the part that lies, according to prophecy, deserted and pathless, extends some ten miles to the Tower of Babel. The inhabited portion called Baldach is very large and populous."

That Hillah has remained until this day is well known.

Therefore the prediction of complete and everlasting solitude still awaits fulfilment.

10. So also does the detail that the Arabian shall never pitch his tent there (Is 14. 20), for many travellers have testified to the contrary. About, probably, the year 1915, I read in Egypt a diary by Dr. W. E. Blackstone, author of *Jesus is Coming*, recounting a then recent tour in Babylonia. He stated that he had tested this point with his Arab guides and that they made no objection to bivouacking among the ruins.

11. This further prediction also has not had fulfilment, that "they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; for thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith Jehovah"

(Jr 51. 26). For many towns and villages have been built out of the remains of Babylon. Porter (*Travels in Georgia, etc.*, ii. 401, 402) enumerates no less than four capital cities the material for which was obtained from the ruins—Seleucia built by the Greeks, Ctesiphon by the Parthians, Al Maidan by the Persians, and Kufa by the Caliphs. Hillah was entirely constructed from the *débris*, and even in the houses of Bagdad the stamped bricks may be frequently noticed. Moreover, besides Hillah, there have been other villages on the site of Babylon indebted to her for their foundations and walls.

12. Nor has it become true that “neither doth any son of man pass thereby” (Jr 51. 43), for the ruins have been frequently visited by travellers and explorers down to this time.

13. In connection with this destruction there is to be the overthrow of a monarch who has some distinctly superhuman features (Is 14. 3-25). He has some connection with “the day star, son of the morning” who had “fallen from heaven” (12), and he has a boundless and impious ambition himself to ascend to, and rule in, heaven, the equal of the Most High (13). No former king of Babylon can be shown to have fulfilled these predictions, least of all in connection with a destruction of Babylon. Such attempts as those of Wordsworth to apply it to Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar in combination are in no sense *exposition*. Even such writers carry the passage on to Antichrist for fulfilment.

14. Yet again, the return to Palestine of a small portion of Israel by the friendly encouragement of Cyrus, and the later return of Ezra and others, were organized and orderly proceedings. Nor did the first instantly accompany the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, but took place later in the first year of his reign, and the other return was much later again under Artaxerxes (Ez 6). But when the city is to be destroyed as prophesied the picture is wholly different. The people of God are to *flee*, to *escape*, as men rushing from deadly peril. “*Flee* out of the midst of Babylon, and *save every man his life*; be not cut off in her iniquity . . .” “My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and *save yourselves* every man from the fierce anger of Jehovah” (Jr 51. 6, 45).

15. A result of *this* destruction of Babylon is universal peace: “The whole earth is at rest, is quiet: they break forth into singing” (Is 14. 7). This consummation, so greatly to be desired, has never yet blessed this war-weary world; but when the Babylon of Rv 18 has been destroyed heaven leads the Hallelujahs in which earth will shortly join (Rv 19. 1-5).

From these fifteen considerations it is a plain consequence that

the divine predictions concerning the city Babylon have never had fulfilment, and that therefore the city must revive at the end of this age, for not one jot or tittle of the words of God can fail. The alternatives are to ignore the details, or to fritter them away into a nebulous indistinctness when they can be made to mean anything or nothing. Both courses are irreverent.

It is of the greatest moment to confidence and to guidance at the present time to recognize, from Holy Scripture, the trend of the present concentration of affairs in the Middle East. Nearly 150 years ago that satanically far-seeing man, Napoleon Bonaparte, as is reported, said that whoever held Babylon held the key to India and the world. In ed. 3 (1887) of *The Great Prophecies*, p. 175, Pember quoted W. Greene, C.E., that, in the year 1851, he had examined in the archives of the War Office at Paris a survey of the Euphrates valley made for Napoleon, which "contained a plan for a new Babylon, with quays, river walls, and other arrangements necessary for a large commercial city." Presumably his campaigns in Egypt and Palestine had this in view. He was thwarted; but England, France, Germany, and Russia have kept the suggestion steadily in mind, and ever since it has been a determining factor in world politics. Antichrist will fulfil what Napoleon attempted and what God has predicted.

SECTION IV. THE GROUNDS OF THE JUDGMENT ARE :

1. The cruel treatment by Babylon of Israel and Palestine. Antisemitism has not yet reached its climax of cruelty and fury. The national apostasy of Israel will reach its height by their league with the last and chief enemy of God, Antichrist, and in consequence it will be by him that their last and fiercest retributive and cleansing fire will be lit. When this shall have served its needful and gracious purpose of curing them of the folly of leaning upon him that smote them (Is 10. 20), then will the wrath of God blaze forth against the Oppressor, while the little remnant of Israel will be saved. Of this Tyrant, Babylon will be the capital, and the fountain of his violence. Its judgment will correspond. Is 14. 1-8 : Jr 50. 6-8 ; 17-20, 28, 33, 34 ; 51. 5, 6, 10, 24, 34-36, 45-53.

2. The world-wide tyranny and ruin that has spread formerly, and will spread again, from this city. Under Nimrod it was the first centre of rule by violence. Under Antichrist it will be the last. Gn 10. 8-12 : Is 14. 4-10, 45-53. It may be noted incidentally that Cyrus did let prisoner peoples return to their own lands, Israel, for example. He seems to have recognized the

unwisdom of having throngs of home-longing and disaffected people scattered about the empire. But the ruler of Babylon here in view will not let his prisoners free (Is 14. 17). As picturing the world-wide ruthlessness of the rule of this city notice the phrases in Jeremiah : “ the hammer of the whole earth ” (50. 23) ; God will break this hammer that He may “ give rest to the earth ” (50. 34) ; and again, “ O destroying mountain . . . which destroyest all the earth ” (51. 25). Then will be fulfilled Rv 11. 17, “ the time came to destroy them that destroy the earth.”

3. The universal corrupting influence of Babylon, past and future. “ Babylon hath been a golden cup in Jehovah’s hand, that made all the earth drunken : the nations have drunk of her wine ; therefore the nations are mad ” (Jr 51. 7). It will be the last great exhibition of that policy of judgment by which, when the wicked have become impossible of reclamation, they are given over to the sense-perverting power of the evils they have chosen, and thus quickly ripen themselves for the deserved and then inevitable wrath. So Pharaoh of old, and so the world at the end : 2 Th 2. 9-11. This is the dread reality that led the heathen to say, Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad. See Jr 25. 15-38, and 48. 26 for a particular application to Moab.

Babylon pre-eminently has been a centre of such blinding influence. It was there, in the days of Nimrod, that idolatry was commenced. With the migration of the nations it spread thence universally. Even at this late date the idolatries of every people still bear the characteristic features of Babylonian idolatry. Thus was it the first centre of wilful apostasy from and rebellion against the only true God.

It was in Babylon that the false philosophies as to the divine Being, creation, man, worship, and destiny were first instilled by Satan into the minds of man. Pantheism, reincarnation, demonism, spiritism, the gross indulgence of the flesh as part of religion—all were initiated in Babylon, and at the end of the age all will centre there again and reach their acme of defiant impiety. Thus Rv 18. 2, 3 will find fulfilment.

4. The gross luxuriousness of the city will cry for vengeance. C. 18 reveals the utmost possible earth-mindedness, an entire concentration upon the riches and pleasures of the bodily life. They will be eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and caring for nought else, least of all for the cruelties inflicted upon foes and slaves, as made to contribute to ease and luxury (18. 13).

Oh, the deadly dangers to the soul attendant upon riches and luxury ! “ The iniquity of Sodom was . . . pride, fulness of

bread, and prosperous ease . . . neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (Ezekiel 16. 49). This will reach its deepest depths in Babylon, and therefore shall her judgment be as sudden and irremediable as that of Sodom. History offers many solemn instances, as that of the Roman empire fifteen centuries ago, the French monarchy before the Revolution, and the Russian monarchy in our own times. Would that the peoples of to-day would accept warning. The western world has long been pressing along the same road. Still the demand is for less work, more pay, more idle time, more soft living, more self-indulgence, accompanied by more rejection of God and more carelessness as to eternity.

5. Another cause of retribution is the age-long persecution of the people of God: "Rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her . . . and in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth" (Revelation 18. 24). The priesthoods of every system of idolatry, pagan or nominally Christian, have been ever the wolves to harass the little flock that has followed the true Shepherd. The bloody effort commenced in Babylon, and will be resumed and continued there to the end.

6. It was in Babylon under Nimrod that the policy of rule by force was adopted. The false philosophies fostered callousness and cruelty, and even justified it, as does the doctrine of evolution to-day: the weak *ought* to be destroyed that the strong may triumph. Almost all kings and other rulers have drunk of this poisoned wine and been maddened by it. Some present-day rulers and peoples are fearful examples.

When at last Babylon shall have become again the world-centre of vice and cruelty, and have resumed her ancient policy, then shall she be justly held responsible for its whole course and consequence: in her shall be "found the blood of *all* that have been slain on the earth" (Revelation 18. 24), and she shall receive "double for all her sins" (Revelation 18. 6). It is only by paying regard to the whole cycle of the city's career, from its ancient commencement to its final revival and its re-adoption of its ancient wickedness, that it is seen to be just to hold it responsible for *all* the consequences that have accrued from the principles it set in motion. Fearful as has been its career, this cannot be rightly said of the Roman Catholic Church; *it* is not responsible for *all* the blood shed on the earth.

While this discussion was being penned (June 8 and 9, 1941) the

present titanic struggle entered upon conflict for possession of Syria and Mesopotamia, the goal toward which world-politics have so long moved. Germany has failed in the attempt, and happy will be any people which fails to secure possession of Babylon, Satan's world-centre.

But men of this world will be blind to the warnings of Scripture. Yet let those who believe God heed well the repeated call to abandon Babylon. How urgently it is worded : " I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues, for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities " (18. 4, 5). There will, then, be people of God on earth down to that last hour of the present age, and some will be found at Babylon. Jews will be among them, for these are thrice called to flee the city (Jr 50. 8 ; 51. 6, 45). But in the New Testament " My people " will have a wider scope than Israel alone. Comp. I Pt 2. 9.

It was Babylonia (Chaldea) that Abraham must wholly forsake if he would walk with God as a pilgrim and inherit the land of promise (Gn 12).

It was the outward splendour of Babylon (" a goodly Babylonish mantle ") that seduced Achan and caused the first defeat of the people of God on entering the land of promise (Jh 7. 21).

It was from Babylon that they came who peopled the lands that the ten tribes had lost, and who commenced the mixed corrupt worship that defiled that territory (II Kn 16. 24).

It was pride at being courted by the king of Babylon that tripped up the godly Hezekiah, which was a first step to Judah being despoiled by Babylon (Is 39). As showing how subtle and dangerous is the influence emanating from Babylon, we read these solemn words : " Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon . . . *God left him*, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart " (II Ch 32. 31).

The gravity of the good king's error lay largely in this, that he already knew the mind of God about Babylon, since Isaiah's prophecies concerning that land and city (cs. 7-14) had been already given while Hezekiah was growing up, the heir apparent. He was nine years of age when Ahaz, his father, became king, and was twenty-five when his father died (II Ch 28. 1 ; 29. 1), and the prophecies in question were given in the days of Ahaz (Is 7. 1 ; 14. 28).

Yet in spite of this knowledge he welcomed the Babylonian ambassadors, made much of them, and in vanity displayed to them all his treasures. But we do not read that he made much

of his, the only true, God before them. The knowledge that such vast wealth lay in Jerusalem would naturally make the rulers of Babylon desire to grasp it, which in due time they did.

All this has its spiritual counterpart in the history of the church of God in this age. At first disciples heeded the call to Abraham, the father of all who believe, and walked in his steps. Jews forsook Judaism, which in spirit had become Babylonian, and Gentile converts forsook actual Babylonianism, which all heathen worship was, and still is.

But all too quickly the outward splendours and carnal delights of Babylonianism seduced the servants of God to commit fornication with "Jezebel," and the powerful pleadings of Paul (I Cr 8), of John (I Jn 5. 21), and even of the Lord himself (Rv 2 and 3), to guard themselves from idols were disregarded. Presently the king of "Babylon," Constantine the Great, made overtures to the morally enfeebled church, whereupon all that was in her heart was revealed. Left by God to be thus tested, she welcomed the Emperor's offers, in due course was absorbed into his worldly empire, and nominal Christianity became Babylonian in character and form.

Every revival that true Christianity has since known has come by a handful of Babylon's captives leaving that spiritual realm and returning to set up again the true worship of the true God, even if in weakness and very incompletely. It is this that imparts such rich spiritual value to the histories of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*. Both now and to the end of the age, the call of God is emphatic: "Come forth, My people, out of her"; and His warning is solemn and urgent: "That ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rv 18. 4).

But in spite of all this history and command, many real children of God persist in adherence to church systems which, in outward splendour and symbolic ritual, are plainly Babylonian. Yet other believers share in governmental and worldly enterprises plainly to do with the kingdoms of this world and not with that kingdom of God which is presently to destroy and supersede these all, when they shall again be parts of that literal Babylonian empire which, under Antichrist, will rule the whole earth.

In the light of all this how serious to-day appears teaching at all calculated to break the call of God, and of His warnings, by assuring His people that most certainly they will all have been removed from the earth before the perils of the last years of this age set in. God does not tacitly encourage His people to remain in the foul vessel of Babylonianism by offering a miraculous deliverance just before she is to founder in the gale of His wrath.

He urges them to abandon the ship at once, lest the tempest burst in which Babylon and all therein shall perish.

To us who do not dwell there literally the command means that we refuse utterly the slightest association with the philosophy, worship, politics, principles, practice, and spirit that are Babylonian in character. These are found in measure in all national life, and in every humanly organized system of religion. Man's world is infected : all nations have drunk of the wine. Let us take deeply to heart this comforting but searching word : " Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins, *that He might rescue us out of this present evil age*, according to the will of our God and Father ; to Whom be the glory unto the ages of the ages " (Gl 1 3-5). Can my soul add sincerely, with Paul, " Amen " ?

NOTE.—In connection with this and the preceding chapter the serious reader is recommended to study A. Hislop's *The Two Babylons* and G. H. Pember's *Earth's Earliest Ages and Mystery, Babylon the Great*.

CHAPTER XIII

(C. 19. 1-10)

I. THE WORLD ABOVE is not one illimitable, undifferentiated expanse ; it consists of various and diversified regions. This was intimated in the first sentence of the Bible : “ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” All through the Old Testament the word is regularly in the plural, as “ the God of the heavens shall set up a kingdom ” (Dn 2. 44). This is continued in the first book of the New Testament : “ the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh ” (Mt 3. 2, and always in that book). Paul speaks of having been caught up “ even to [as far as to *éos*] a third heaven ” (II Cr 12. 2) ; and the plural has come at Rv 12. 12 : “ Rejoice O heavens.” Thus our Lord said : “ In My Father’s house are many abiding places . . . I go to prepare a place for you ” (Jn 14. 2, 3).

Similarly, the inhabitants of those regions are not of one uniform, indistinguishable class, but comprise differing orders and companies. Thus these verses speak of different persons and groups. 1. A great multitude (ver. 1). 2. A still vaster multitude, distinguished from the other by the mightier volume of its united voice (6). 3. The twenty-four elders. 4. The four living beings (4). 5. “ All the servants of God,” which would include the persons already specified ; and 6. These servants are divided into “ small and great,” the lowlier in rank and the nobler (5). Then there is : 7. The angel that spoke to John, one of the immense host of angels of which various members and classes are mentioned elsewhere in the visions. 8. Another order specified are “ the saints, the wife of the Lamb ” (7, 8). There are also, 9. The Voice from the throne ; 10. The Lamb ; and 11. Highest of all, the Lord our God the Almighty. 12. A twelfth class is named, but may be in part an earthly company, namely, the guests invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb, who obviously are not the bride, for she cannot be a guest at her own wedding, nor be “ invited ” to it. See later.

II. THE GROUPS.

1. It is difficult to identify the first group. It is a “ great multitude ” praising with a “ great voice.” The terms are those used in 7. 9, 10 of the throng who come out of the great tribulation, but there are differences. (a) That throng was beyond

numbering, which is not said of this. (b) This here is not described as "*the* great multitude," as if referring back to that before-mentioned. (c) The songs differ. The former did not commence or close with Hallelujah ! It is much briefer, nor did it mention the judgment of the harlot. It included the Lamb as Object of praise : here He is not mentioned. (d) Then the whole angelic host swelled the praise ; here they are not in view. (e) It differed in time. The earlier preceded the final judgments ; here it is after them.

Yet the company may be the same, enlarging their worship, but this cannot be affirmed. If they are not the same, the alternative seems to be that they are angels.

2. As to the elders and living creatures, see on cs. 4 and 5.

3. As to the Voice from the throne see on 16. 17. Here, however, the voice does not, as there, come "out of the *temple*" but "from the direction of the throne" ($\alphaπὸ τοῦ θρόνου$). Now the Lamb is the One who is "in the middle of the throne," that is, standing centrally before it (5. 6), and Who is still seen there at the close of the Tribulation (7. 17), and so immediately before this vision. It is no sufficient objection that the call here is "Praise *our* God, all ye His servants" rather than "*your* God," for His own words, spoken of His ascension, "I ascend unto . . . My God and *your* God" (Jn 20. 17), would lead easily to "*our* God," and would be in harmony with His position as the divine Precentor who is to lead the praise in the midst of the assembly of His people (Hb 2. 12).

4. The company whose voice is as of many waters and great thunders may be regarded as that heavenly choir formerly shown as leading the praise in which only the Firstfruits were able to join (14. 2, 3). They must needs be of angelic nature since they were already in heaven when the Firstfruits arrived and these seem to be the first from earth to gain that high place on Mount Zion.

III. HALLELUJAH (Praise ye Jah). The Greek form of this Hebrew word came into use among Jews speaking Greek before the time of Christ and was adopted early among Christians (see Swete). But its sudden insertion here into the praises of heaven is arresting. These four times are its only occurrences in the New Testament. Its use here is one more call to revert to the Old Testament in explication of this book. It is found at the close of Ps 104, 105, 115, 116, 117 ; at the beginning of 111, 112 ; and at the beginning and end of 106, 113, 135, 146-150.

The themes that call forth this exclamation of praise are, in general, the greatness and goodness of God, and then His holy

wrath. At its first occurrence the latter is the immediate cause of praise: "Let sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless Jehovah O my soul. Hallelujah" (Ps 104. 35). It is the same in our passage: "Hallelujah; the salvation and the glory and the power belong to our God: for true and righteous are His judgments; for He hath judged the great harlot . . . and a second time they say, Hallelujah."

To magnify the terrible and destructive judgments of God, to praise Him for the overwhelming of sinners and the desolations He makes on earth by wars, famines, pestilences, and convulsions of nature, indicates a heart in profound union with the Holy One. It is the opposite of that querulous, doubting, even rebellious and irreverent state of mind which too readily and too often is displayed when God's judgments are in the earth. Angels, elders, living creatures can thus praise God, in unison with the Voice from the throne. Can *my* heart instantly and honestly say Amen, Hallelujah?

IV. GOD REIGNETH. Yet the more positive ground of praise is that "the Lord our God the Almighty reigneth" (6). He had reigned universally in the original era of creation, and then heavens and earth had enjoyed unalloyed happiness. But sin disputed this rule, first in heaven and then on earth, to the misery of both. This forced the age-long conflict between God and Satan, light and darkness, right and wrong, which is still in progress, with awful distress to angels and men, and with sorrow of heart to God also. But the visions have once more (comp. 11. 17) reached the time when the victory of the Almighty has been asserted and He again reigns triumphant, and shall do so until, through the Son, every enemy is at last in subjection, and God shall be all in all for ever (I Cr 15. 24-28). Now is answered the long-continued petition "Thy kingdom come," and heaven cries Hallelujah!

V. THE BRIDE. The Father has appointed over His kingdom a king, even the Lamb who suffered in meekness, the Lion who conquered by might. It is the perfect combination of these two qualities that qualifies Him as the perfect Ruler. But a king desires a consort to share His glory and to satisfy and to display His love. The hour for the fulfilling of this desire has arrived: "the marriage of the Lamb is come," and heaven rejoices with exceeding gladness and cries, Hallelujah!

1. *The Time.* The Lord has already descended as a thief and taken to Himself those who were looking for Him (Hb 9. 28). The armies of the Beast are now mustering for the last battle (16. 13-16); but it has not yet been fought: the Word of God

and His armies have not yet rushed in irresistible might upon the Beast and his forces (19. 11-21). At this point, before the Mighty One goes forth to war, He celebrates the nuptials with His now ready bride, so that when He shall be manifested she too shall be manifested with Him in glory (Cl 3. 4 : I Jn 3. 2, 3).

2. *Anticipations.* From of old the Father had designed for the Son of His love this bliss of having as His own peculiar possession, and in His own proper realm, the heavens, a consort formed of ransomed sinners of the human race. They were given to Him by the Father (Jn 17. 6) in a more special sense than the general gift of universal heirship and ownership (Hb 1. 2 : Jn 3. 35 : Mt 11. 27). He purchased them at the fabulous price of His own priceless blood : "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph 5. 25), "in order that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works" (Tt 2. 14).

This so ancient design had been intimated long in advance. Eve had been brought to Adam to be his joy and help in dominion over the renewed earth (Gn 2. 18-25). Rebecca had been brought to Isaac, the son and heir (Gn 24), and Ruth, the alien, to Boaz, the mighty and rich (Rh 2. 1), as if to intimate that Gentiles would be joined with Jews in the bridal blessings. In a quite special sense Israel, as a people, had been taken by Jehovah and associated with Himself in a privilege and nearness granted to no other people, a relationship often pictured by this same figure of husband and wife (Is 50. 1 : Jr 3 : Ek 16). And though for unfaithfulness Israel has been given a bill of divorcement, yet, as a people, shall she, on repentance, be again received into relationship, as the passages cited, and many others, show, and shall stand on earth at the King's right hand, the place of honour (Ps 45. 9-11). God does not change His mind as to His gifts and calling, though human folly and sin may defer the accomplishment of His call and the enjoyment of His gifts.

All this, however, was of earth as to its sphere, and but anticipatory of the higher joys and honours designed for realization in the heavenly portion of the one kingdom. From the time of Abraham at least God had spoken to men of that world above and men of faith had embraced the prospect and fixed upon it as their hope (Hb 11. 9-16). In this present age of Christ's rejection by the world that has become the sole prospect of faith, for in this world the faithful are promised nothing but the bare necessities of a pilgrim and are exhorted to "set their hope perfectly [that is, undividedly and uninterruptedly] on the favour that is being brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pt 1.

13). This supreme favour is that of being associated with Christ glorified in a fellowship so intimate, so tender, so glorious, and so useful, as is pictured by a bride with her husband.

This union will crown and complete the program of God for the universe. It will perfect the joy of the Son, for no union more intimate and sweet is known in creation. Then shall He "see of the travail of His soul and be *satisfied*" (Is 53. 11). And it is the highest honour that ever can be available for the redeemed, since the Bride sits with the Bridegroom on His throne, and God never can set any one *above* His Son. Thus this secret counsel concerning Christ and the church in glory "completes the word of God," that is, brings to full development His message to the universe (Cl 1. 25-27), and is necessarily the final unfolding of His counsel concerning the universe in relation to His Son. Well might the apostle, well may we, "endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain salvation, that which is in Christ Jesus, *with* glory eternal" (II Tm 2. 10).

3. *Who form the Bride?* As to what persons will form this exalted company there have been differences of opinion. Some seem to include at last all the saved of all the ages. This is contrary to the figure used. A bride is only one among the myriads of a king's subjects, though the most exalted of them in rank. If all were the bride, over whom would she and the king reign? As remarked before, the bride cannot be the guests at the wedding feast. Again, c. 21. 12 will show Israel as associated with but not the same as the bride, and ver. 24 of that chapter to 22. 2 distinguishes the saved nations from the bride.

Others have limited the bride to the saved of this present age. But it is hard to see how those men of faith of any age who embraced the heavenly hope, lived in consequence as pilgrims and aliens among men, and looked for the heavenly city as their portion, shall not have part in those privileges. That in those earlier days the figure of bridal relationship may not have been made known to them, and that so they did not perhaps appreciate fully what glories were latent in their hope, would be no reason for them not reaching its fulness in the fulfilment. None of us now appreciates fully what is in store. In Hb 11. 40 their and our perfecting is conjoined.

But again, the school of teaching last in question insists that all the saved of this age, without exception, will certainly share this regal, bridal glory. That this is the present call, offer, and ideal of God is true. See Eph 5. 25-33: Cl 1. 21-23; for God is calling us "into His own kingdom and glory" (I Th 2. 12), even "his eternal glory" (I Pt 5. 10), not to some creaturely

glory. Such terms declare far more than forgiveness and the possession of eternal life, in which blessings all the saved share alike and for ever. But to share God's own eternal glory is evidently far more and higher than to partake in those initial mercies common to all the saved of all ages, without which indeed they would not be of the saved at all.

Yet it is too often overlooked that in no sphere does God *coerce* the subjects of His grace. He respects fully the gift of free will wherever He has granted this noble endowment. Hence the creature can "fall short of the grace of God" (Hb 12. 15) and receive that grace in vain (II Cr 6. 1), which last is not the same as to reject that grace entirely. Let it be observed that :

(a) It is God's desire ($\thetaέλω$ wish, longing, but not *fiat*) that all men should be saved. For this He has made provision in Christ Jesus, "Who gave himself a ransom for all" (I Tm 2. 3-6). But not all are willing to be saved, and not all will be.

(b) It was the call of God that all who left Egypt with Moses should reach Canaan, and at the Red Sea the entrance of them all was celebrated in advance (Ex 15. 13-17). But only two of the adult men entered the land.

(c) It was the offer of God that all of that redeemed nation should be priests (Ex 19. 6). In the fact only one family of them has had this honoured service.

(d) Of that family one branch secured the privilege in perpetuity on account of the faithfulness of its head (Nm 25. 10-13) ; but

(e) Of his family one branch, that of Eli, was deprived of the honour on account of unfaithfulness (I Sm 3. 10-14).

(f) God would have gathered into safety all Jerusalem's children, as a hen gathers her chicken under her wings, but *they would not* ; and they had their own way to their undoing (Mt 23. 37-39).

Will it be affirmed that all of this has no lesson and warning for the heirs of the heavenly calling ? Then were it the case that *not all* Scripture is written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come (I Cr 10. 11).

Because of this unvarying law, that God respects the freedom of action of man, and holds each responsible for its use (and otherwise how shall God judge man ?), it follows that the response of the heart of man is required to the offer of the heart of God, and without this response the privilege offered will not be secured. Every offer is open to all of the persons to whom it is made ; it is realized by such only as embrace it ; and moreover, it is "through faith and long-patience ($μακροθυμία$)" that every boon

promised is at last gained, in this age as in earlier times (Hb 6. 11, 12). Hence arise the "ifs" and exhortations and warnings of the New Testament so very frequently addressed to believers and churches. It is greatly to be deplored that many parry the force of the mass of passages of this order by transferring them to false professors, whereas they are so often plainly addressed to true believers and sometimes to believers of quite noble quality, as, for example, in Hebrews: see c. 6. 9-12 and 10. 32-36. We grieve for the responsibility they must carry at the judgment seat of Christ who have thus promoted laxity of life by encouraging believers to disregard the warnings God has multiplied.

4. *The Fitness of the Bride.* But whatever view be taken of the foregoing question, it were well indeed that nothing should lessen the effect upon the conscience of the treatment of the subject in this passage. The whole stress is laid upon the moral fitness of the bride for the grand occasion. "His wife hath *made herself* ready" for the union; "it was granted unto her that she should *array herself*."

Her bridal attire is not that meretricious splendour of the great harlot, purple and scarlet robes, glittering with gold, jewels, and pearls (17. 4), which did but conceal the hidden deformity and corruption. The holy bride wears only fine linen, glisteningly white and pure. Of old, that was the attire of the high priest when he entered annually into the Holy of Holies before the Presence (Lv 16. 4). That fine linen was spun by human hands (Ex 35. 25), and similarly the attire of the bride is of her own making; "the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (8).

Even the AV rendering does not allow of this being that righteousness of God which is imputed to the sinner upon faith in Christ, for it is there termed "the righteousness of *saints*," not the righteousness of God. But the meaning of the former term is fixed by its prior use at c. 15. 4. The AV there renders inexactly, "Thy *judgments* are made manifest," but the RV properly by "Thy righteous acts have been made manifest" ($\tauὰ \deltaικαιώματα$). "This clean, glistening, byssus-made fabric represents the righteous actions of the saints . . . the sum of the saintly acts of the members of Christ, wrought in them by His Spirit" (Swete); and so Milligan:

These acts are not the imputed righteousness of Christ, although only in Christ are the acts performed. They express the moral and religious condition of those who constitute the bride. No outward righteousness alone, with which we might be clothed as with a garment, is a sufficient preparation for future blessedness. An inward change is not less necessary, a personal and spiritual meetness

for the inheritance of the saints in the light. Christ must not only be on us as a robe, but in us as a life, if we are to have the hope of glory (Cl 1. 27). Let us not be afraid of words like these. Rightly viewed, they in no way interfere with our completeness in the Beloved alone, or with the fact that not by works of righteousness that we have done, but by grace, are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves ; it is the gift of God (Eph 2. 8). All our salvation is of Christ, but the change upon us must be internal as well as external. The elect are foreordained to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rm 8. 29) ; and the Christian condition is expressed in the words which say, not only 'Ye were justified,' but also 'Ye were washed, ye were sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God' (1 Cr 6. 11).

And the literal rendering of this last passage "ye washed yourselves" (RV mgn), emphasizes yet more the truth in question, and shows the harmony of Paul and John upon this truth.

It should be noted :

(1) That the imputed righteousness which justifies is put on the believer by God, not by himself, being reckoned to him, not assumed by him. See Rm 4. 6 : "the man unto whom *God reckoneth* righteousness," and so uniformly. (2) That this reckoning takes place at the first act of faith of each individual ; whereas this arraying of herself is to take place at the bridal day at the close of the career of the whole church of God, and is viewed as an united act.

There is a precision in the words of God corresponding exactly to the facts of things. The wife "arrays herself," and yet it is "given unto her" to do this. (Here again the AV weakly gives "that she should *be arrayed*," hiding the vital point that it is her own act). If the Spirit of holiness had not made holiness possible no member of the church could or would have done holy acts ; but though every holy deed is done by the grace of the Spirit, it is the *saint* who *does* them. It is *God* who works *in* us both to will and to work ; but it is *we* who must work *out* this salvation into a life of holy deeds (Ph 1. 12, 13) ; and if we grieve and quench the Spirit, and so frustrate the work of God within, then the fine linen will not be woven. And in no other attire will any one share in the bridal glory, though in the imputed righteousness every believer stands justified in law. But the pardon of a one-time rebel woman is by no means the same as her becoming later the wife of her sovereign, nor does any necessity exist why the king should think of such an honour for her.

All this is illustrated in the history of Esther. From being a captive slave she is to be exalted to be queen. Everything of

clothing and ornament that she needed was the gift of the king, for she had nothing suitable. But *she had to put them on*, so as to approach the king, as it is written, " Esther put on her royal apparel " (Es 5. 1).

Eph 5. 25-27 is clear and weighty.

(1) " Christ also loved the church " : this is the divine origin of all her prospects.

(2) " and gave Himself up for her " : this is the amazing price that frees the slave-girl, or pardons the rebel, and by which the king acquires all rights in her. But though redemption has been effected once for all, she cannot pass straight from the slave market, or the condemned cell, to the royal palace and the throne. Much is required to fit her person for the total change of scene and life ; and so

(3) Christ purchased the church " that He might sanctify her," might make her actually holy, even as she is already righteous by imputation. And this so indispensable work He effects by " the laver [composed of] the water in the word " ($\tauῷ λοντρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν βῆματι$). The laver in the Tabernacle was a vessel into which water was put so that the priests should wash repeatedly and keep clean. The bathing at their consecration was necessary but was not sufficient for entrance into the holy places. Cleansed lepers had to bathe, but that did not grant access to the presence of God in the Tabernacle (Lv 14). The priests must also wash their hands and feet again and again, on penalty of death, twice threatened, if they attempted service to God unwashed (Ex 30. 17-21). Thus also Jesus took a basin, poured water thereinto, and proceeded to wash the feet of His followers, so as to impress heavily upon us that actual holiness is indispensable to fellowship with Him : " If I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me " (Jn 13). He did not say "*in* Me." that would have made final salvation to depend on daily state ; but " with Me," as My companion and servant.

The laver is here (Eph 5) used as a picture of the Word of God : " water in the word." The water (as always when a type) means the Spirit of God : " living water . . . this spake He of the Spirit " (Jn 7. 37-39). Christ speaks to the redeemed believer : if obedience be at once rendered, the grace of the Spirit is at once experienced, making obedience possible. This is the law of matters spiritual : " Go wash . . . He went, and came seeing " : " take up thy bed and walk " ; and obeying, doing at once what he could not do, the energy was given to do it. A father speaks to his boy about a disagreeable habit ; if the boy gives heed, the word of his father cleanses that habit out of the boy's life : if he

disregards his father, he remains disfigured in character and life.

Justification is an initial benefit, granted once for all ; sanctification is a life-long process ; the priest must wash his hands and his feet to the end of his course ; and therefore :

“ Let no man think that sudden, in a minute,
All is accomplished, and the work is done :
Though with thy earliest dawn thou should’st begin it,
Scare were it ended with thy setting sun.”

(3) This gracious and indispensable work in the believer is thus wrought by Christ ; by Him speaking to the church. Thus it is *given* unto her to become pure. But words must be obeyed or they remain inoperative, and thus “ it is given unto her to *array herself* ” by doing the righteous acts directed by the Word of God. All is of grace ; but of grace used, not grace abused, of grace obeyed, not of grace neglected. For the grace of God instructs us “ to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present age,” and only so living are we truly “ looking for the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ ” ; for “ He gave himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works ” (Tt 2. 11-14). Therefore “ every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure ” (I Jn 3. 3).

To the justified, who “ have obtained like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ ” (II Pt 1. 1-4) Peter adds the encouraging assurance that “ God hath granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness,” thus making holiness of life possible. Unto this end God has further “ granted unto us His precious and exceeding great promises.” As a father, starting his loved son in business, may hand him a roll of promissory notes issued by a bank, and payable on demand, so God has enriched His children for all the demands of a holy life. We secure the spiritual wealth promised by the prayer of faith and by obedience to our Father’s instructions ; and as His character thus becomes increasingly developed in us we become “ partakers of divine nature.” This is not the same as having eternal life, though a consequence of it. All human beings have human life, but their natures differ ; some being harsh by nature, some kind ; some active, some indolent ; and so on. All of the family of God have the life of the Father, but they differ in the degree in which what is natural to God (as to

be holy, or to love enemies) becomes natural to them. And this difference is proportionate to the measure of the appropriation by each of the divine promises. Neglect of the promises leaves the soul poor, as to neglect banknotes leaves the pocket poor.

Further, parental discipline, through the trials of life, however caused, is another contributing element. The Father *scourges* every son He receives, that they "may become partakers of His holiness" (Hb 12. 10). As justified they already possess His righteousness; but they are to be made to share His holiness; and blessed is he who humbles himself under the mighty hand of God, even when the wicked may be the hand that presses, instead of resenting and resisting the discipline. Such advance in holiness and so in preparation for the bridal honour and joy.

(4) *Without blemish.* It is in view of the bridal day that Christ has loved, redeemed, and now is sanctifying the church, "in order that He might present the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." These terms, "spot, wrinkle, holy, without blemish," have reference to external appearance: the two former denote surface defects, the two latter visible excellence. The last is a specially significant and priestly term. An animal to be dedicated to God, and accepted by Him, had to be without visible blemish, and sternly did the Holy One complain when blemished beasts were presented (Ml 1. 6 ff.). The priest, too, had to be without physical defect, or he could not officiate in holy things. He was to keep himself scrupulously clean in walk and associations, and also he must be without blemish as to external form (Lv 21). Now the persons pictured as a bride are also described as "priests unto God" (Rv 1. 6). Both figures demand the same moral condition; the one for priestly access and service, the other for intimate association with Him who "offered Himself without blemish unto God" (Hb 9. 14).

The standard is high, yet attainable by the Spirit through obedience to the Word. The histories of Joseph, Samuel, and Daniel are narrated at length and in detail. Each was surrounded with gross moral depravity, but God records nothing against either. This does not mean that they were actually sinless—only Christ was that; but it does mean that they walked before men without visible defilement and disfigurement of life. And thus Paul wrote to believers in a wicked heathen city, "that ye may be blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" (Ph 2. 12-16). It is possible for the believer to "keep himself unspotted from the world" (Js 1. 27), and he who thus walks in white garments here

and now shall be permitted to array himself for fellowship with Christ as part of the bride at last. (See on 3. 4, 5 above, and consider also II Cr. 7. 1 and 11. 2, 3.) It is for each to weave his own pure bridal attire, by the grace of God and to the praise alone of the glory of that grace. The Bride will thus be to the pleasure and honour of the Bridegroom.

VI. THE MARRIAGE FEAST. The union of Ahasuerus and Esther took place in the privacy of the royal palace: the wedding feast followed later (Es 2. 16-18). Thus here also, there is simply an announcement of the honour of being one of the king's guests; it is not stated that the marriage supper takes place at this precise moment. Inasmuch as it seems that the guests will include persons on earth when the Bridegroom returns here (Mt 22. 1-14; 25. 1-13), it appears that the "feast" will take place on earth at the opening of the kingdom era. See also Mt 26. 29: Lk 22. 18, 30.

Here, then, are three distinct ideas: (1) The guests are not the bride; (2) there is to be an interval between the "marriage" and the "feast"; (3) the latter is to be on earth. Perhaps these features offer a clue to the exact meaning of some of Christ's prophetic parables, but so large a subject cannot be now treated.

The omission of the bride and of her union from those parables is significant, but the significance has been largely missed, by later teaching of the New Testament as to the bride having been read back into the parables. The omission harmonizes with the feature elsewhere attributed to the bride that she is to be composed, not of all the saved, even of this age, but of such from among the saved as are, by grace, ever watchful, prayerful, separated from the world, undefiled, walking in white garments of their own weaving. Within the vaster company of the rest of the saved is the realm where the Lord's parables, and many other passages, have application. Blessed are they who are guests, and unhappy are they who miss even this privilege, such as the guest without a wedding garment, or the foolish virgins, or the unfaithful steward. And beyond this area again lies the still wider realm of those at the End Times who had never even heard the Bridegroom's fame nor seen His glory (Is 56. 19), but to whom will then go forth the call of Is 55. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

The Lord when here stated the principles upon which He will deal with His household, and these principles will apply to all who have been of that household throughout this age; but the strict application, as made by Christ, was to those servants He

will find on earth when He shall actually return, and it is to these then alive that the details given will apply. Therefore He did not in His parables introduce the bride since she will have been completed and removed prior to His descent to the earth. From this lack of mention it has been inferred, but without warrant, that she will have been removed before ever the End Days arrive, and that she will include every child of God, dead or still on earth, of this whole age. These inferences, and others dependent upon them, have confused the subject, and also have greatly weakened the solemn warnings as to the moral state which must characterize each who is to attain to the highest status and honours in the kingdom.

Such distinctions as have been noted were before suggested in the Old Testament. At Esther's marriage feast there was not merely one general crowd of guests, but they are differentiated into "the king's princes and servants" (Es 2. 18). All of these two classes were honoured with the royal invitation; yet it is obvious that they were not Esther, the queen, nor did they include all the king's subjects. What if some of the guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb should be those angel princes who have served faithfully through the spiritual conflicts with rebel princes of these earlier ages? What if the servants shall include those ministering spirits who even now render deacon's service to the saints, with a view to preparing them for the coming inheritance (Hb 1. 14)? In any case these would not be the bride. One such styled himself a "fellow-slave" with John and his brethren (Rv 19. 10). The program of the Most High is far wider and grander than most realize, and includes all His creatures, heavenly and earthly. And by far the greater part of what He has been pleased to reveal falls for fulfilment this side of the great white throne. Yet all too many readers and preachers seem to think of little but eternity, which, moreover, they restrict to "heaven" and "hell," overlooking entirely that there is to be a new earth also. This limitation of thought results in the applying to eternity of passages which have not to do therewith, with consequent confusion in interpretation.

Psalm 45 is the Song of the Royal Bridegroom. Observe the *personnel* introduced. The Bridegroom is at once the Mighty Warrior with a sword (3-5) [as in the context of our passage (Rv 19. 11-16)], and is also God (6). Yet His God has blessed and anointed Him (2, 7); so that He is God exalted by God, a mystery made plain by the clearer New Testament unfolding of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Next, the Bridegroom has a queen whose place of honour is at

His right hand. Then He has "companions" (fellows)—comp. Hb 3. 14 : Rv 3. 4, 5 ; 14. 4 ; 17. 14 : and I Kn 12. 8. Thus also the queen has "the virgins her companions that follow her" (14), as in Mt 25. 1-13, and these shall share in the "gladness and rejoicing," that is, in the feast within the palace (15). Others mentioned are certain princesses (9) ; the people and the family of the queen (10) ; and beyond these nearer circles are the outside peoples, as of Tyre ; that is, Gentiles are seen approaching and honouring the King (12), in which noble employ the queen is called to lead : "for He is thy Lord ; and worship thou Him" (11).

All this is highly suggestive of the reality and variety that will mark those future days when heaven and earth will be con-joined, one kingdom, in connection with Him who is Lord of *all*. It introduces a rich diversity which elevates the mind far beyond the fundamental but only initial distinction between saved and unsaved, which is the furthest that so many ever penetrate into the wondrous counsels of the Almighty. Here is verily a fair field and no favour ; yet "know ye not that those running in a race *all* run, but *one* receives the prize : even so run that ye may attain" the prize (I Cr 9. 24 : Ph 3. 12-16).

VII. The thoughts added in ver. 10 may be stated briefly.

1. "These are true words of God" : a double thought—the words are true ; they are of God. In 17. 17 the phrase "the words of God" means the announcement of His purposes as to destroying Mystic Babylon, the harlot, and of Antichrist reigning. Here it is the announcement that the city Babylon will be destroyed and the pure wife be joined to the Lamb. In 21. 5 and 22. 6 the phrase is extended, and emphasizes the completion of the purposes of God that heaven and earth shall be made new, and that the wife of the Lamb shall be glorious eternally.

2. The angel declares himself a *fellow-slave* (*σύνδουλος*) with the human servants of God, a conjunction of status and service little realized in general from our side but known in apostolic days (Ac 1. 10, 11 ; 5. 19 ; 8. 26 ; 10. 3 ; 12. 11 ; 27. 23 : Hb 1. 14 : and for even rebel angels being made subservient to a servant of God see I Cr 5. 5).

3. Being himself a slave the angel will not allow a fellow-slave to offer to him worship, but at once directs it to God. But how overwhelming must have been the visions that the apostle should forget for the moment a truth and duty he knew so well ; and later should a second time be thus carried beyond himself (22. 8, 9). It were well if our hearts were as deeply impressed, without this unlawful impulse following.

4. The very spirit that animates all true prophecy is that it bears witness to Jesus. That an angel should speak of his Lord simply by His personal name is exceptional and observable. For a servant to address his sovereign by his personal name were an impertinence not readily to be forgiven. For man or angel to address the Lord of glory, the King of kings, by His name is irreverence, if unintentional; yet it is a common blemish in hymns and it is heard in prayer. But in the narratives of the Lord's life on earth as man we read frequently that *Jesus* did or said this and that. The point therefore of the angel's choice of the name here will be that it was the spirit that animated all true prophecy that it pointed to the great fact that God would assume humanity; and its use after His exaltation to glory emphasizes that He retains that humanity for ever. It is in the name of *Jesus* that every knee shall bow, in confession that *He*, the glorified man, is Lord of all by the will of God (Ph 2. 10, 11).

This affords the decisive test of the divine origin of a prophecy. See I Cr 12. 3 and I Jn 4. 2, 3. Consequently this testimony to Jesus is to be "held," not to be neglected, or varied, or confused, or abandoned. This holding fast and holding forth the truth concerning Jesus, even at the cost of life itself (12. 11), displays the faithful servant and is the very essence of overcoming, of conquering.

CHAPTER XIV

VICTORY

(19. 11-20. 3)

I. Some fourteen centuries B.C., speaking of the latter days, the God of Israel said (Dt 32. 39-42) :

See now that I, even I, am he,
And there is no god with me :
I kill, and I make alive ;
I have wounded, and I heal :
And there is none that can deliver out of my hand.
For I lift up my hand to heaven, And say, As I live for ever,
If I whet the lightning of my sword,
And mine hand take hold on judgment ;
I will render vengeance to mine adversaries,
And will recompense them that hate me.
I will make mine arrows drunk with blood,
Any my sword shall devour flesh ;
With the blood of the slain and the captives,
From the head of the leaders of the enemy.

This should lead on to the blessing of the Gentile peoples in conjunction with His people, Israel, as the closing words of the song intimated :

Rejoice, O ye nations with His people :
For he will avenge the blood of his servants,
And will render vengeance to his adversaries,
And will make expiation for his land, for his people. (ver. 43.)

Perhaps five centuries later a psalmist described the King who had thus proclaimed through Moses His victory in the latter days. Ps 45. 2 says :

Thou art fairer than the children of men :
Grace is poured into thy lips.

This beauty of character and graciousness of speech was seen in Jesus as He " advanced in wisdom and stature and in grace with God and men " (Lk 2. 52), and especially did they wonder " at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth " (Lk 4. 22).

From this description of the opening days of Him whom God had " therefore [that is, because of His personal excellence]

blessed for ever," the psalmist proceeded at once to describe Him as fulfilling that earlier prophecy through Moses. He who is perfect in character and full of grace can be trusted to execute the holy wrath of God, without miscarriage of justice by either failure or excess.

Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one [continues the psalm],
 Thy glory and thy majesty.
 And in thy majesty ride on prosperously,
 In behalf of truth and meekness and righteousness :
 And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.
 Thine arrows are sharp ;
 The peoples fall under thee ;
 They are in the heart of the king's enemies. (Ps 45. 3-5.)

This terrific and terrible activity of the Conqueror-King issues in the establishing of His throne for ever ; and the aforesaid blessing of the nations is because "a sceptre of equity is the sceptre of his kingdom" (ver. 6).

Our passage (Rv 19) gives the final picture of this Conqueror and conquest, and it too leads on to His reign (20. 4-6).

II. Four statements are given as to the Conqueror's name.

1. He is the *Faithful and True*, a combination of Reliability and Reality (11). In 1. 5 He has been called "the faithful witness" ; in 3. 14 "the faithful and true witness." God had found Him wholly faithful in the hour of keenest trial and personal danger : "before Pontius Pilate He witnessed the good confession" (I Tm 6. 13), though it cost Him his life. Henceforth the Father rests wholly upon Him for the fulfilment of every divine counsel and work. He is the Man of God's right hand, whom God has made strong for Himself (Ps 80. 17) ; and He is true, that is, He is in reality all that others are only partially or but apparently. All judgment is entrusted to Him because He is "Son of man," is the true, complete, ideal exhibition of what man is according to God (Jn 5. 27).

2. He has a name known only to Himself. No one but the Father comprehends the Son (Mt 11. 27). In His Person and in His relationship to the Father there is an infinity unfathomable by the finite mind.

"The Father only Thy blest name
 Of Son can comprehend."

This emphasizes His deity as the former title His humanity.

3. He is the *Word of God* (13). He is the One through Whom creation came into existence (Jn 1. 1-4), and in Whom it continues

to exist (Cl 1. 16, 17). It was through Him the Father made the worlds (Hb 1. 2). Thus from the beginning of the universe He is the expression to it of what the Father is ; He is the *Word* of God. All that God does He does by *speaking* ; this is the instrument by which He puts forth His energy, His will. As to the act of creating, "He *spake*, and it was : He *commanded*, and all things stood fast" (Ps 33. 9). "God *said*, Let light be ! and light was" (Gn 1. 3). Thus it is in the new creation also. The new birth is effected by God *speaking*. "He that heareth my *word*, and believeth . . . hath eternal life" (Jn 5. 24), for we have been "begotten again by the *word* of God, which liveth and abideth" (I Pt 1. 23). Thus the Lord wrought miracles upon the bodies also of men : "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk" (Jn 5. 8). The greatness of the centurion's faith lay in his attributing this effectual energy to the bare word of Jesus : "speak with a word, and my servant shall be healed" (Lk 7. 7). It is by the same word that the work of God makes progress in the soul of the regenerate : it "worketh in you that believe" (I Th 2. 13). Angels also are made powerful by the same means : "Bless the Lord, ye angels of his : Ye mighty in strength, that fulfil his word, hearkening unto the voice of his word" (Ps 103. 20). His words "are spirit and are life" (Jn 6. 63).

At the point reached in the visions the foes of God are to be destroyed by the same means, by "the sharp sword that proceedeth out of His mouth" (vs. 15, 21).

4. His full title is *King of kings and Lord of lords*. He is the supreme sovereign of heaven and of earth (17. 14). In the days of John it was treason and a capital offence to attribute these titles to any other than the Emperor, as the embodiment on earth of deity. This has been so in pagan lands, as in Japan from ancient times. It will become so again under Antichrist, and the tendency to this consummation of blasphemy is very evident in Europe to-day. "No man can say, Jesus is Lord, except in [the energy of] the Holy Spirit" (I Cr 12. 3). Which of us shall earn the commendation, "thou didst not deny My name" ?

By these various titles the Conqueror is identified with the eternal Son and Word ; with the Son of man, Jesus Christ, who stood before Pilate ; with the Lamb slain and glorified ; with the Head over God's house, the church, Whose eyes are as a flame of fire to wither up all contrary to God ; with the Messiah to whom universal sovereignty has from of old been granted by the Father, and with it authority to judge and to make war.

It is restful to know that none less perfect than He is judge, is

the wearer of the many diadems of rule in heaven and earth. The dread but inevitable work shall be done righteously and therefore effectually, and "the work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever" (Is 32. 17).

5. The identity is carried further. He is the *Treader* of "the winepress, the great winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God" (ver. 15 ; 14. 17-20), and so the Fulfiller of Is 63. 1-6 and Jl 3. 13. Thus His raiment is stained with blood, as of a warrior trampling down his foes or as one treading grapes in the winepress. Moreover He is the Son to whom God issued the decree declaring Him owner of the whole earth, with His seat at Zion, who should break to pieces rebellious nations, as one smashes fragile things by a rod of iron (Ps 2. 7-9). This authority He had mentioned before to the churches, and had promised to share it with such of His people as should conquer in present conflicts, as He conquered when here (2. 26-29).

III. *His Armies*. There is a difference of judgment as to whether these are glorified saints or are angels. We think the latter are meant.

1. Is there any other passage where saints are pictured as soldiers after their present earth-conflicts are over ? They are then a bride, not a body ; kings and priests, not warriors ; that is, these latter figures are not used of them in their state of glory.

2. The term is plural, "armies," not "the army of heaven" ; but the glorified church seems viewed either as one company, or as many individuals. On the other hand, in the Old Testament heavenly beings, though mentioned some twelve times as God's "host," are far more frequently spoken of by the plural term "hosts" ; that is, as divided into armies, army corps, as we might say to-day. The title "Jehovah of hosts" is used about 280 times. The usage concerning Israel is parallel. Sometimes the whole nation is one host (Jh 5. 14, 15) ; but more often each tribe is viewed as a separate host (Nm 1. 52 ; 2. 4 ; etc.).

This usage is not applied to the church of God. The only passage we recall which may bear in the opposite direction is 17. 14, which says that the ten kings "shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings ; and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful." Yet this triple description might apply to the *elect* angels who have been faithful to God while others of their order rebelled ; but if taken of overcoming Christians (which I believe is right), it does not by itself seem enough to determine that the "armies of heaven" are human

beings seeing that the preponderant usage of Scripture is that these are angelic.

IV. *His Enemies.* These are the Beast, his False Prophet, the Kings of the Earth, and their armies. See c. 13, and 17. 12-14. Here is a truly hellish and powerful league of nations, the world combined to fight against the Word of God. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure" (Ps 2. 1-5). One thrust from the sword of His mouth, that is, one word of command from His lips, and the angels through whom He is pleased to exert His might shall act upon these defiant, blaspheming, irreclaimable foes; their vital forces shall fail instantly, "their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their sockets, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth" (Zh 14. 12).

But the two chief Rebels, the Beast and the False Prophet, shall not be thus mercifully treated by an instant death. These "were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone" (20). Having lived before and died before, there remains for them only the second death.

As to the lake of fire, see later on 20. 14.

V. *Jehovah's Feast.* So fearful a carnage would breed immediate pestilence were the corpses left to rot in a hot land. But for His people's sake God has taken kindly forethought against this. By angelic influence a mighty assembling of birds of prey takes place, and these natural scavengers avert the disaster. The passage illuminates Is 18. 6; 56. 9: Ek 39. 17: Zp 1. 7, showing the time and event to which these earlier scriptures point.

VI. *The Devil Imprisoned.* But the chief and secret instigator of this futile conflict is yet at large, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience (Eph 2. 2). It were vain to hope for general peace and piety on earth while he is at liberty. He is therefore arrested, chained, imprisoned, and the door shut and sealed above him, that mankind may be free from his baneful inward influence and outward activities for the thousand years that Christ shall reign on earth. Heaven rejoiced when those regions were freed from his presence, while earth knew added woes (12. 12); now earth also shall share the joy of heaven at his absence.

It must be presumed that his angel and demon servants share his lot, for were these still at large they could, like guerillas, much disturb the peace of the King's realms. Ps 82. 6, 7 intimates the

imprisonment of the fallen angels, and Mt 8. 29 shows that demons anticipate and dread that day of retribution. Is 24. 21, 22 is to the same effect. Speaking of the time when "the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed [comp. Mt 24. 29 and Rv 6. 12], for Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion," it is declared that "it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in prison, and after many days shall they be visited," that is punished. This last will be at the judgment of the great white throne. Thus shall they be cast down to Tartarus, like earlier princes of their order, and be committed to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment. See II Pt. 2. 4.

Upon the abyss see c. XII, Sect. I, 4.

As the Victor receives here a fourfold designation so does the Vanquished.

1. He is the *Dragon*, the real monster of whom the ancient world enshrined in mythology its earlier recollections, embellished later by its fancies.

2. He is the *Old Serpent*, whose foul track and poisonous activities are revealed in all Scripture from Eden onward, and exhibited in all human history since the Fall.

3. He is the *Devil*, the slanderer of God to man (Gn 3. 1-5) and of man to God (Jb 1. 9-11; 2. 4, 5); the first liar, the father (originator) of all deceit (Jn 8. 44).

4. He is *Satan*, the adversary who opposes the will of God at all points, and who withstands the people of God both in heaven (12. 10) and on earth (I Pt 5. 8, 9, and see Lk 18. 1-8). The contrary of what he says is truth, the opposite of what he suggests is the will of God.

Thus are the destroyers of the earth destroyed (11. 18), and wars are made to cease unto the ends of the earth. Here is seen the mercy that overrules destruction unto restoration (Ps 46. 8-11).

It is at this point in the visions that a large amount of Old Testament detail falls, dealing with the sweeping away of the ruins of Satan's empire that the kingdom of God may be established in its place.

CHAPTER XV

AUTHORITY AND THE MILLENNIUM

(C. 20. 4-6)

Victory is barren and may be disastrous unless followed by the establishment of just and benevolent authority. The victory of the Lamb being complete the visions pass at once to His reign.

But how extraordinarily brief is the treatment. It is compressed into three verses. The following considerations may explain this feature.

1. The period of Messiah's reign on earth was the chief theme of the Old Testament. Fulness of detail had been given of the ages leading on to it, of the stupendous climax of judgment that must and should prepare the way for it, and of the advent in glory of the King and its blessed results. This was the goal of prophecy, and it was not needful that the ground be covered again.

2. What could be added helpfully of description and glory would be shown in the immediately subsequent description of the heavenly city.

3. The end of all prophecy is conduct, and the present section is sufficient as a spur to the development of a holy character and to fidelity to Christ even at the cost of suffering and death, by showing the privilege, position, and service in His kingdom to be thus attained.

4. Here is stated distinctly what before had been only intimated briefly, and as it were casually, that there are to be two resurrections of the dead and the relation of these to Messiah's kingdom.

For these last two purposes the very brevity adds to clarity and emphasis.

I. *Who will Reign with Christ?* This is the first and chief matter touched. A king must needs have a body of superior officers to serve him in administering his kingdom. Darius appointed three grades of such: 120 satraps, three presidents, of whom one, Daniel, was senior, the king's viceregent (Dn 6. 1). David, too, had administrators and priests, men who had served and suffered with him in the long years of his rejection, as Joab and Ahimelech (II Sm 8. 15-18). But Jonathan, though he loved

David as his own soul and willingly resigned to him the throne, seeking to be second only in the kingdom though himself the heir-apparent (I Sm 23. 17), did not even enter David's kingdom, for he did not share his rejection. This is the moral warning the narrative seems to give. Through filial loyalty he supported the king and the system which God had rejected, and lost his life in its collapse. It was the natural course, not the spiritual ; the latter, the path of faith, would have been judged unnatural. Jesus has said : " He that loveth father . . . more than Me, is not worthy of Me " (Mt 10. 37).

Three classes are to share the glory of reigning with God's Anointed, the Christ.

i. " I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them," that is, was entrusted to them.

(i) In possibility this includes all the saints : " know ye not that the saints shall judge the world [and] angels ? " (I Cr 6. 2, 3 : Rv 1. 6).

(ii) Specifically, thrones are promised to the apostles : " ye are they who have continued with Me in My trials ; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as My Father appointed unto Me, that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom ; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel " (Lk 22. 28-30). This special grant was on account of these men having gone through with Christ to the end of His rejection. He would forgive their failings, even the severe failure of that night. He would have regard to the general and dominant fact that they had stuck to His person and cause through thick and thin, and would do so further unto the end of life. In consequence He would make to them a grant such as His Father had made to Him, a grant of " kingdom " (there is no article) : " I appoint unto you kingdom," that is, kingship, royal rank and authority.

This dignity He then described as being " to sit at His table in His kingdom." At a royal banquet there are many tables, one on a dais, higher than the rest, being the royal place where the sovereign sits. To share that table is to share the highest place and honour. Now Christ, in His resurrection body, ate material food : " They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish. And He took it, and did eat before them " (Lk 24. 42, 43), and, at the institution of the supper, He foretold that He will do so again in His kingdom : " But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom " (Mt 26. 29 : Mk 14. 25 : Lk 22. 18). As therefore the table and the eating and the drinking of Messiah in the days of His kingdom are to be literal, so will be the fulfilment

of the promises that the apostles are to eat and drink with Him. That beings of the upper world can use the food of earth was shown long before, when Jehovah and the two angels ate of the meal prepared by Abraham (Gn 18. 8).

But the Lord further promised the eleven that they should "sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The former promise being plainly literal so will this be. Thus Israel, and in twelve tribes, will be restored in that kingdom era. This endorses the literality of the vision of Rv 7, when representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel are preserved from destruction just as the kingdom age is to set in. Here, then, are shown some of those who in resurrection will sit on thrones and be invested with the royal office of the judge. In ancient times the king was personally the supreme judge. But he had legal assessors who sat with him, the judges of the high court, which was hence named in England the *King's Bench* Division of the courts of law.

(iii) Promises to the same effect are given to the overcomers of the churches : " He that overcometh, and he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations ; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers ; as I also have received of My father " (Rv 2. 26, 27). " He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne " (Rv 3. 21).

It is to be much observed that these prospects are open to all believers, as (i) above ; but they are contingent upon exactly the conditions shown in the case of the eleven, namely, fighting the battles of the Lord victoriously, and with such perseverance as to maintain His works " unto the end " either of life or of the age, as the case may be. Thus the law of former reference is sufficient to show who they are that John saw sitting upon thrones and receiving authority as judges. They include each who conquered in whatever were the conflicts in the post to which each was assigned in the world-wide battlefield.

2. But because in the fight of the long ages of human history many suffered even unto death by martyrdom, their resurrection and honour is mentioned specially. It is to be noted that these were slaughtered " for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God." Therefore they were disciples of Jesus, Christians. And

3. Because the closing battles, those against the Beast, will be the hottest of all in the long campaign of the ages, those who then conquer are given special testimony ; " they lived [in resurrection life] . . . and reigned with the Messiah." That these share in

this resurrection shows that the event does not take place earlier than the close of his reign and the great Tribulation. That this resurrection takes place in stages, of which the one here in view is the last, is an unnecessary supposition and without proof.

These three classes of believers alone are shown as sharing in the first resurrection and sharing with Christ the sovereignty in His kingdom. Some have admitted that not all believers will reign in this millennial kingdom, yet contend that all will share in this first resurrection. But it is distinctly asserted that *all* who then rise will reign : “ Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection . . . they shall reign ” (ver. 6). Therefore they who are not to reign will not be then raised. Hence, “ the rest of the dead ” who “ lived not till the thousand years should be finished,” will include saved persons not “ accounted worthy of that age and the resurrection which is out from among the dead ” (Lk 20. 35) ; and hence also arose Paul’s set purpose, expressed with the utmost earnestness, “ if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection which is out from among the dead,” where he repeats the phrase used by the Lord (Ph 3. 11).

It is character that counts. “ Blessed and *holy* is the one having part in the first resurrection ” (6). A special privilege of such is that they hold the comforting assurance of the Judge of all that “ over these the second death hath no authority.” The very fact that they are already in immortal bodies of resurrection glory (I Cr 15. 50-58), attained by sharing this first resurrection, shows indisputably that eternal death can never touch them. Those still unraised must await the second resurrection and final judgment for this to be declared (ver. 15). That “ the one believing upon the Son hath eternal life ” (Jn 3. 36) is not challenged, is indeed beyond challenge ; but what persons have so believed, according to the mind of the Judge, will be put finally beyond question only by their “ coming forth out of the tombs unto resurrection of life ” (Jn 5. 29). For some this will be at the first resurrection, for the rest at the second. See on ver. 15 and 2. 11 ; 3. 5. As His resurrection from the dead was His Father’s final and all-convincing acknowledgment that Jesus was His Son (Rm 1. 4), putting the matter beyond further controversy, so their resurrection unto life will put beyond further doubt who are the children of God.

II. *The Service of the Raised* is to be both Priestly and Regal.

The priest is a person who is (1) “ appointed for men ” (2) “ in things pertaining to God ” (Hb 5. 1). He mediates. From the beginning of creation the Son has been the Mediator between the

Father and the entire universe. He did not take this office first in resurrection, but only resumed then as man what had before been his dignity as the Son. It was through Him that the Father made all things. It is He who radiates through the universe the glory of the Father. He declares to creation the counsels of God, is the chief Prophet of God (Hb 1. 1-3). When sin had defiled and ruined creation, it belonged to Him to come forth unto the habitable world (which term includes the realms of the angels, Hb 1. 6), to purify it and to reconcile it to God (Hb 1. 3 : Cl 1. 21). Only through Him can any being approach the Father (Jn 14. 6, *οὐδεὶς* no *one*, not merely no *man*).

But the high priest in Israel had a whole family of associated and subordinate priests. Only the high priest could make the general and plenary atonement for all the people (Lv 16) ; but the under priests could mediate in detail and to the individual the benefit of that plenary atonement. Thus also Christ alone could be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world ; but His priestly servants can convey to men the knowledge of that atoning sacrifice, and so, by the Spirit, can minister to men the benefit thereof. So, while Christ is truly the only Saviour, Paul could say, " that *I* may by all means save some " (I Cr 9. 22).

This is present service, and it will be continued in the coming age by those who have found grace for the toils and troubles of rendering it now.

Then also, " the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth ; for he is the messenger of Jehovah of hosts " (Ml 2. 7). How shall such fulfil this solemn function whose lips express vanity or whose lives are contrary to the law they are to require others to keep ?

In that future day there will be vast need of heavenly instruction, for the masses of men will have sunk into utter darkness as to God, His will and His ways (Is 60. 2), and as to the one means of reconciliation and pardon, and still more as to all the high mysteries of the universe. The heavenly priests shall instruct them. As yet we ourselves know only in part, but then we shall know (understand) fully, even as we have been fully known (understood) by God (I Cr 13. 12) ; and none can yet say what this may include as to both subjects of knowledge and ability to impart and apply it.

Then, too, as the messenger of God, the priest in Israel had authority. The people were bound, under pain of capital punishment, to accept his decisions (Dt 17. 8-13). This was a survival, in limited measure, of the older patriarchal institution when the sovereign was the chief priest, ruling the people for God and

dispensing to them the blessings of God. Melchizedec was such a priest-king (Gn 14. 18-20 : Hb 7. 1-3), and Moses seems to have been the last of such recognized by God. He acted as priest before Aaron ever did, also appointing others to offer burnt offerings (Ex 24. 4-8), and himself officiated at the consecration of Aaron (Lv 8). Moreover, he "was *king* in Jeshurun" (Dt 33. 4, 5).

It was the purpose of God that the whole people of Israel should be a "kingdom of priests," which was announced before the law was given at Sinai (Ex 19. 5, 6). But while redemption from judgment had been free to every one who would sprinkle blood on his door, the privilege of priestly and royal service among the other nations of the earth was dependent upon obedience, and Israel has never as a people enjoyed this honour. Yet they will do so when, under Messiah, their heart and spirit shall have been renewed, even as it is written of that day : "And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and aliens shall be your ploughmen and vinedressers. But ye shall be named the priests of Jehovah : men shall call you the ministers of our God" (Is 61. 5, 6). Thus shall there be a kingdom of priests in the earthly section of the great kingdom of God.

But in this as in all respects, earthly things are copies of the heavenly things. And in this present age God is forming for Christ a company of obedient saints who shall fill the same office, not indeed superseding Israel in the realm of earth, but discharging that same high and blessed service in that heavenly realm where Christ is and where their hearts are already attached to Him. This is their present office : they are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (I Pt 2. 9). And when finally they have been practised and perfected they shall be unto God a kingdom and priests in the higher heavenly realm of the kingdom (Rv 1. 6 ; 20. 6).

According to the thought of God, both kings and priests exist (1) to secure His rights in His kingdom, and (2) to dispense His favours to His subjects : they are "appointed (1) for men, (2) in things pertaining to God" (Hb 5. 1).

Thus does this brief word in Rv 1. 6 present in miniature a full picture of the administrative side of the kingdom of God and of Christ when at last "the God of the heavens shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (Dn 2. 44).

Lv 9. 22-24 and Lk 24. 50-53 offer an instructive comparison. The consecration of Aaron as priest having been completed by the offering of the sacrifices, "he lifted up his hands toward the

people and blessed them." Thus did Jesus, the work of the cross finished, lift up His hands and bless His people. Then Moses and Aaron (who are a joint type of Christ, as both God's Messenger to us and our Priest before Him, *Hb* 3. 1) went into the tent of meeting ; and thus Christ departed from this place of His sacrifice into the true tabernacle, the heavens. From the tent they two came forth and blessed the people, and so shall the Lord Jesus come forth again from that heavenly place, and the glory of Jehovah shall appear unto all the earth (*Is* 40. 5), as it did on that former occasion to all Israel. And as then the fire of God, by consuming the sacrifice on the altar, testified to His acceptance and good pleasure, so shall mankind learn hereafter that in Christ God has reconciled the world unto Himself (*II Cr* 5. 19). And this future priestly service those raised in the first resurrection shall be privileged to share.

III. *The Period of the Kingdom.*

The kingdom is to be commenced at the first resurrection and closed by the second resurrection. It has been asserted that this is the only scripture that teaches the doctrine of the "millennium," and some have therefore challenged the whole conception. The *believer*, however, accepts as enough even one divine statement, if no more is given. But in fact the *Revelation* is here true to its own character as co-ordinating and completing earlier intimations.

i. Psalm 1 is an introduction to the whole course and issues of human life. The godly walk one path and reach *its* goal ; the ungodly another path and reach *its* goal. Because of their way being evil and downward "therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous" (5). Now both the Septuagint and the Vulgate translate the Hebrew, not by "stand" but "rise," the former rendering the word by *ἀναστῆσονται* and the latter by *resurgent* (see Pember, *The Great Prophecies concerning Israel and the Gentiles*, 463). The testimony of the LXX is important. It is a legitimate rendering, for the Hebrew word has resurrection as one of its meanings : see *Jb* 14. 12 and *Is* 26. 19 ; and it shows that this understanding of Ps. 1 is very ancient and not caused by later christian opinion.

This amounts to a statement that the wicked will not rise from the dead to stand in the assembly of the righteous. Now the great white throne judgment, to which the second resurrection brings forth the dead, will not be an assembly of the righteous with some wicked among them, but rather an assembly of the wicked with some righteous to be separated from among them

(see above, and on ver. 15). It is the first resurrection that is composed of the holy, to which therefore the psalm will refer, and it is in exact agreement with *Revelation* that no ungodly will then arise.

2. Is 26. 19 uses the same word as the psalm when it says: "Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise." The whole connection, before and after, is with the day of Jehovah, the purging of the iniquity of Jacob, the gathering to Palestine of the outcasts of Israel (26. 1; 27. 1, 9, 12, 13). Now in definite contrast to this resurrection of the godly there has been said, but five verses before (14), that the godless shall not then arise: "They are dead, they shall *not* live; they are deceased, they shall *not* rise: therefore hast Thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish. The next verse (15) shows that the time is when the nation of Israel shall be increased and glorified. Thus godly Israelites will share in the first resurrection.

3. Daniel 12. 2 is to the same effect, when translated in harmony with, not in opposition to, the foregoing passages and Rv 20. 5 and Jn 5. 25-29. It then will mean: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, these [that rise] to everlasting life, and these [the rest of the dead, that do not then rise] to shame and everlasting contempt" (see Tregelles *Daniel in loco*, and Pember, *Great Prophecies*, ed. 1895, pp. 463, 464). The very terms of the prophecy preclude one general universal resurrection of the dead at one time, for it says that it is "many," therefore not *all*, that shall arise at the time in question. That time is when Michael shall intervene, when the great Tribulation shall be, and the kingdom be set up at the end of the days, in which the righteous Daniel shall rise to share his promised lot (ver. 13).

4. In Jn 5. 25-29 also the Lord Jesus made the same distinction. In ver. 25 He speaks of the dead hearing His *voice* (*φωνή* not His *word* *λόγος* as in ver. 24) and thereupon coming to life. This is to be in the present "hour," meaning this Christian era, even as He had used the same phrase in c. 4. 23, where the words "the hour cometh and now is" cover this whole age of spiritual worship. But in 5. ²⁸ 29 He mentions another "hour" of which He did not say that it "now is," when *all* then in the tombs shall come forth, and shall be found to be of *two* classes, those that had done good rising unto life, those that had practised evil rising unto judgment. This must be the second resurrection, since Rv 20. 4-6 shows plainly that in the first resurrection only the holy will have part.

5. 1 Cr 15. 22-24. As there is a lengthy period between

Christ rising as the firstfruits of resurrection and the resurrection of those who are of Him at the time of His parousia, an interval of already nearly two thousand years, so there is to be supposed an interval between the latter and "the end," when He shall have subordinated the universe to God. Both intervals are required by the words that every man will be raised "in his own order" (company, band); and by the terms of succession *ἐπειτα . . . εἰτα* "then . . . then."

The Old Testament passages agree in placing the reign of Messiah directly after that resurrection of the godly they intimate, which in turn agrees with Rv 20 in placing the kingdom age between the two resurrections.

IV. *The Duration of the Kingdom.*

Satan is to be bound for a "thousand years" (3) and the saints are to reign with Christ for the same period (4). The term is used six times.

1. In ver. 2 it stands in contrast to a "little time" and may itself mean an indefinitely long time. But it cannot mean "permanently," for that "little time" is to follow "after" it, the thousand years. And it being thus in contrast to an expression of time it must itself imply time, and does not mean simply, as has been suggested, that Satan is bound and Christ reigns "completely" or "perfectly." Moreover, "that age" of the kingdom is set by Christ in contrast to "this age" (Lk 20. 34, 35), and the latter term having a time element so must the former, as indeed the very word "age" indicates. That an "age" may last more than a thousand years is seen by "this age" having done so.

2. From Is 65. 20 we learn that during the period of the kingdom of Messiah there will still be sin and death. The kingdom, though a wondrous period of glory and joy, will still be imperfect, having latent in it the seeds which will develop into the final rebellion after Satan shall have been loosed. Yet just before, in ver. 18, the prophet has spoken of Israel rejoicing "for ever" in that new era, and in many other places the sovereignty and blessing of Israel is said to be *for ever*. Yet the presence of sin and death shows that not the *eternal* state is in view; so that in this connection with the kingdom of Messiah the expression "for ever" means a period of great and unannounced length, yet not endless. If this be so, then the parallel term "a thousand years," when it describes the same era, will have the same indefinite sense. It would scarcely be reasonable, or harmonious with the normal use of language, to reverse this and regard the term "for ever" as meaning only a literal thousand years.

The ancient idea that the history of man from Adam to the close of the kingdom will cover 7000 years, of which the Millennium will be the seventh thousand, is too conjectural to carry weight in settling the present question.

The " thousand years " may be literal ; the term cannot mean any shorter period : but it may have the force of indefinite length, as suggested above.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FINAL REBELLION

(20. 7-10)

The long-drawn drama of a sin-cursed world is nearing its close. The visions hasten to a triple finality: the final rebellion, the last judgment, and the eternal state.

Under God's King the earth has known perfect government, permanent peace, unbounded prosperity. But such ideal outward conditions do not of themselves create ideal beings. From the first days of the kingdom some have yielded only feigned obedience (Ps 18. 44; 66. 3; 81. 15; mgns.). There were also sinners who fell under a curse (Is 65. 20). The children of the godly also are not sinless. Eli's sons were not as their father, nor were Samuel's. So that when spiritual incitement to evil is again active, by the loosing of the great Tempter, it will be seen that unregenerate human nature is unalterable by a favourable environment, that the flesh "is not subject to the law of God, neither is able to be," that its mind, bent, whole tendency is "enmity against God," and that they that are in the flesh are not able to please God, but hasten ever to death (Rm 8. 6-8).

This will be the last and conclusive demonstration that the theory is false that the man is changed by improving his circumstances: the leopard cannot change its spots. Man "must be born anew, from above" or remain an alien to the kingdom of God (Jn 3. 3, 5).

Moreover, the sight and enjoyment of the perfect conditions under Christ have not created in man a sound understanding and discernment. The unrenewed mind can be "deceived," imposed upon, seduced, led astray (*πλανάω*), and so completely that an universal rebellion of the nations of the whole earth can be organized in a short time, which is all that Satan will be allowed. Men can be quickly fired with a fury of war, and excited to a frenzied attack upon God's centre, the "camp" of the heavenly people, and the beloved city.

From these few verses it may be learned:

1. That Satan's long and fearful imprisonment has not changed him. He is still the enemy and deceiver of men, still the rebel

against God, still cursed by the fatal ambition to rule in disregard of his Creator.

2. That man also is unchanged. His equally long but so privileged and happy circumstances have not altered his nature. He is still weak, wayward, rebellious.

3. It is hinted that the human race has multiplied under the favourable condition of earth freed from the curse and made exceedingly fruitful. They are "as the sand of the sea," and, as before the Flood (Gn 6), so now, it seems when the race multiplied that its wickedness increased till heaven could endure no more.

4. It is shown that there will be a special centre of those termed "saints." The last former mention of these (19. 8) is of the heavenly company who are to form the wife of the Lamb. It will be natural that the "queen" shall dwell near the King, and we know that His earthly abode is to be Mount Zion at Jerusalem (Ps 2. 6 and scores of passages). "Camp" (*παρεμβολή*) is used six times of the castle of Antonia, near the temple at Jerusalem, where resided the senior Roman officer and his men. Thus will God's divine Vicegerent and His executive have a millennial centre on earth, as later in the new earth (21. 2, 3).

5. The scene being obviously on earth, so the "beloved city" must be an earthly city. It is distinguished from the "camp," yet must be contiguous thereto, since both are surrounded at once by the attacking army. If any doubt what city is meant let him read the terms of endearment used by God of Jerusalem, and of no other city, in Messiah's day, as found in Zh 1. 14-17; 2. 7, 8; 8. 1-8, and other passages too numerous to cite.

6. Seeing that an universal deception of mankind is effected so rapidly, and that Satan is not personally ubiquitous, it must be presumed that his angel hosts are loosed with him, as before they were bound with him. See ver. 2 above.

7. The scene tells how futile is conflict with God who is a consuming fire. As Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed in an hour, as Ahaziah's men were burned up at the word of Elijah, so now these last insensate rebels of the human race are devoured by fire from heaven. The supremacy of God is the security of eternity.

8. Gog and Magog. The use of these titles naturally suggests that there will be correspondence between this attack on Jerusalem at the close of the Millennium and that former attack before the Millennium, as given in Ek 38, 39. Upon this last see my *Daniel*, App. C. Is it that this invasion will be organized under the leadership of the ruler of the same area as that earlier invasion? Will Armenia be again the headquarters of this conspiracy and

Har Magedon be again its centre of mobilization ? History often repeats itself ; and to the end, as the Middle East is to be the divine centre of government for the earth, it must needs be so of human rebellion and of war.

9. Now at last the dread contest which commenced in heaven when Satan rose up against the Most High, is concluded on earth by his being cast into the lake of fire prepared for him and his angels (Mt 25. 41). What deep and solemn reflections the awful event should cause. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Day Star, Son of the Morning !" (Is 14. 13). Let us join with his and our God to lament his downfall and doom : "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre" (Ek 28. 11, 12). It is indeed lamentable that the highest may become the lowest, the first the last, the brightest the basest. How glorious, how awful is the grandest of all natural gifts, the freedom of the will. How indispensable to its right exercise is the humility of love that bows reverently to the will of God and trusts instantly to His supporting grace. But when love of self displaces the love of God the sure end is eternal ruin, unless grace can restore through repentance and faith ; and a sinner, alas, can reach a state when these are no longer possible.

Upon the lake of fire see the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE

(C. 20. 11-15)

Surely this is the most august and solemn scene in Scripture. The destiny of angels, demons, and men is to be decided and declared. That the description is given in so few and simple sentences makes it literature of the very highest order, for so the essential features stand out with the utmost distinctness and force, and the effect is overwhelming.

Yet this simplicity of statement conceals profound questions which the brevity used does not permit should be answered. We shall look at some of these and enquire if Scripture elsewhere supplies answers.

Question 1. *Where is this throne situate*, seeing that earth and heaven are pictured as having fled away? For earth and heaven comprise the universe. (Gn 1. 1). This raises

Ques. 2. *What is meant by the earth and heaven fleeing away?* Their disappearance is emphasized by the statement added that "there was found no place for them." Does this imply the annihilation of their very substance? It would seem not, for

(a) After this fleeing away, the sea, death, and Hades are shown giving up the dead which were in them: now these three regions are part of this earth and are present after it has "fled away."

(b) In Dn 2. 35 the metal image is said to be crushed to dust, which the wind disperses like chaff so thoroughly that it is said "no place was found" for it. This did not imply the annihilation of chaff or powder, but that it ceased to form the composite bodies each had been before.

(c) There are several passages where phrases occur similar to those before us:

(i) Jb 14. 12. When Job, speaking of the dead, said "Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be roused out of their sleep," he did not mean that the dead never would be raised, nor that the heavens would literally cease to exist; because later he expresses his confidence that he would himself be raised and

would see his Redeemer standing on the earth (19. 25-27), which implies the continuance of the existing order of nature.

(ii) Is 24. 22, 23 foretells a judgment of angels and human rulers, and that they "shall be shut up in the prison" for a period and then be visited. At that time "the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed." The context shows that this is to be when Jehovah comes to reign on Zion, that is, it is millennial.

(iii) Is 34. 4 says that "all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fade away." This also is millennial, for it is the year of vengeance on Edom for its cruelty to Israel (ver. 6 ff.). Thus the terms "dissolving" and "fading away" do not import ceasing to exist, but describe what to human sight will appear to take place.

(iv) Is 51. 6 gives an even fuller description: "Lift up your eyes unto the heavens and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner." Yet even this vivid scene is millennial, being the time when Jehovah shall comfort Zion and its people shall return thither with singing (ver. 3, 11; etc.).

As the heavens and the earth continue to exist for a further thousand years at least, even these strong expressions cannot import their annihilation. This is the more clear from

(v) Is 1. 9 and 51. 8, in both which the judgment upon *men* is described by the same figure that "they shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up." Yet the persons continue to exist, though in another realm and form. This is the evident force of

(vi) Ps 102. 25-27, quoted at Hb 1. 10.

Of old hast Thou laid the foundations of the earth ;
 And the heavens are the work of Thy hands.
 They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure :
 Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment ;
 As a vesture shalt Thou change them,
 And they shall be changed ;
 But Thou art the same,
 And Thy years shall have no end.

The strict contrast here is not between endlessness in the Lord and ceasing to be as to creation, but between the unchangeability of God and that the heavens and the earth shall be changed. Now "change" implies continued existence. If a garment were

annihilated it would not be "changed." Of the non-existent neither change nor anything else can be affirmed.

(vii) Rv 6. 12-17 repeats the words of Christ (Mt 24. 29) as to mighty disturbances in the heavens, affecting sun, moon, and stars, as well as in the earth by earthquake. But it is added that "the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." "Removal" will not imply extinction, even as it did not to the roll of Isaiah which Christ rolled up in the synagogue and gave back to the attendant, to be returned presently to its place. Moreover, after this removal and disturbance the rocks and mountains are still there, for men call on them to fall upon them.

It would therefore seem that, in the passages cited, such expressions as "no place was found," "vanishing," "fading away," "dissolving," "being no more," "rolled together," and "changed" import in their essence no more than does the last term "changed," but they describe various circumstances of that change.

Two other statements by Christ must be considered.

(viii) Mt 5. 18. "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished." Taken by themselves these words do not assert that heaven and earth will pass away, but amount only to an assumption of possibility; for *εως* *αν* with the subjunctive *παρέλθη* may mean "whenever heaven and earth may pass away (if ever they do)." But the meaning is settled by the next and later statement.

(ix) Mt 24. 34, 35 is stronger: "This generation shall in no wise (*οὐ μή*) pass away till all these things have been accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall in no wise pass away." Applied to a generation of mankind "pass away" does not mean "cease to be" as to the continued existence of the persons, but only that they cease to dwell on earth at the same time, as a generation. Applied to words spoken it means to fail of effect or fulfilment, or cease to be binding: but the words themselves as recorded abide. Thus as to heaven and earth, "pass away" will mean as to their present form, or perhaps only as to moral state and order. The circumstances of this passing away, and its results, must be learned elsewhere.

(x) II Pt 3 is a chief passage. Vs. 5 and 6 teach that by a certain pre-existing arrangement of waters, connected with both heaven and earth, the then existing cosmos (*ὁ τότε κόσμος*), not the earth only, perished. This would seem to refer to that overthrow of the original creation mentioned in Gn 1. 2. This occurred

by a fiat of God ; and by the same almighty word a further destruction of the heavens and the earth is to be wrought by fire (ver. 7). As the former event was literal, affecting the literal regions named and wrought by a literal agent, water, so presumably will the future overthrow and agent be literal. But the "perishing" of the former heavens and earth did not involve the annihilation of their substance, and it is the same word that is used by Peter in cs. 2. 1 and 3 and 3. 7 of the destruction of impious men (*ἀπόλλυμι, ἀπώλεια*). The word means to cease to maintain its first condition and to fulfil its appointed purpose, as when a leathern bottle "perishes" and no longer can hold water or wine (Mt 9. 17). Hence it does not mean that either skins or men or the heavens and earth are destroyed out of existence.

But the literality of the event foretold by Peter seems determined by the detail that the heavens and the earth will pass away "with a rushing noise" (*δοιξηδόν*), which seems hardly susceptible of a non-literal sense ; as also by the repeated statement that so intense shall be the heat that the elements of which the heavens and the earth are compounded shall melt and dissolve. Yet even so drastic a process as dissolution by melting does not cause the elementary substances themselves to pass out of existence, though their combinations and forms are changed.

Perhaps the word "elements" does not here mean the basic chemicals, but the heavenly bodies, sun, moon, and stars, regarded as severally the elements which form together the universe as a cosmos.

(xi) The same almighty Voice which caused Mount Sinai to shake at the giving of the law "will cause to tremble, not the earth only, but also the heaven." This is to occur only once, which signifies the removing of the things shaken, that the things not having been shaken may abide. As this is to be the final sifting of all things by judgment it must coincide with that final purging of all things by judgment after which new heavens and new earth are to emerge. So that some of the things formerly existent are to survive the ordeal and to abide, which indicates that the substance of them is not annihilated.

If this is correct, it shows that the "fleeing away" of heaven and earth does not mean their extinction, which agrees with the feature mentioned that some regions of the earth are shown as existing later. The scene will then be one which John was made to see in vision in order to enhance the majesty and solemnity attending the taking of the throne by the Judge. It may be regarded as the fullest possible display of that reverence and awe

which is really, though in comparison very feebly, expressed by all in a court rising to their feet as the judge enters to take his seat. It is as though on the judge entering all present withdrew for a time. The passage thus corresponds with the sense of Is 34. 4 and Rv 6. 14 cited above. It is a real appearance seen by John, just as the earlier passages describe what men will really see, namely, the sun black, the moon as blood, the heavens removed; yet the sun, moon, and stars themselves remain and figure in later events. The phrase "no place was found for them" must therefore be understood as limited by the words "the face of Him that sat upon the throne," which means that they could not abide before His local presence as there seated. Perhaps the moral force is that of I Jn 2. 28: "And now, little children, abide in Him, that if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed from Him [not shrink back with shame from Him (Alford, Darby, Westcott, Fausset, Weymouth)] at His presence."

The foregoing will afford answer to Question 1 above. As the fleeing away is symbolical, the location of the throne will be in heaven, as shown in various places, as Ps 103. 19: "Jehovah hath established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all": Is 60. 1: "The heaven is My throne": etc.

Ques. 3. *Is the One sitting on the throne God the Father or the Son?* For the former answer it is urged that all through the *Revelation* hitherto "the One sitting on the throne" is the Father. For the latter opinion Jn 5. 22 is considered by many to be decisive, the words of Christ, "For neither doth the Father judge any one [οὐδέποτε; the mention of "man" unduly limits the statement, as in several other places where the Greek is indefinite], but He hath given all judgment unto the Son."

The weakness of the former argument is that it assumes that the throne here is the same throne as has been before seen. But this seems unwarranted. The throne on which the Ancient of Days sits is described fully in cs. 4 and 5, with all its striking accompaniments, particularly the subordinate thrones and rulers and also the sign of God's covenant, the rainbow. None of these is seen here, and the description is very different: it is simply "a great white throne." The thrones being distinct it will not follow that the Enthroned must be the same person, and the Lord's statement will decide that He is to be the judge at this final assize, which is supported by Ac 13. 31 and Rm 2. 16.

Moreover, it is to be observed that, in fact, it is not the Sitter

upon the throne in the preceding portion of the *Revelation* who actually inflicts the judgments detailed. It is the Lamb who opens the Seals (6. 1), and who treads "the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God" (19. 15). From the great white throne He completes this work of judgment which since He opened Seal 1 has been in His hands. So stupendous is the task of justly deciding the destiny of the incalculable numbers of beings involved, with all the intricate, complicated, and secret factors that interact in each life, that no mind less than that of God himself could be equal thereto. The Son of man is himself God. How good it is that One so able and perfect is the sole arbiter of destiny, and none other.

Ques. 4. *Why are those judged described as the dead?* Have they not been raised from the dead? Yes, from the place of the dead, but not from the state of death. It is a judgment of persons who are dead at the time they are judged. There is no ground for reading in that they have been made to live before the judgment takes place. They are styled "the dead." No one would think of styling living persons "the dead." The term employed (*νεκρός*) is nowhere used of persons not actually dead, physically or morally. Resurrection does not of itself assure life, in the proper sense of the term. Dead persons can be raised dead. In Jn 5. 29 our Lord states a clear contrast: "They that have done good shall come forth unto resurrection of *life*, and they that have done evil unto resurrection of *judgment*." Here the act of resurrection is simply a "coming forth," and the Lord did not say that they shall come forth *alive*, but only that they shall come forth "unto" one of two destinies, life or judgment. This "unto" (*εἰς*) has the force of issuing in, with a view to, a certain state, showing that both the one and the other are to be subsequent to the act of resurrection. Indeed, there seems to be no scripture that at the moment they come forth they have any other body than that psychical counterpart which Samuel had when he appeared to Saul (1 Sm 28. 12-14). See Ans. 8, p. 355.

This resurrection, therefore, differs from the first resurrection, for, according to I Cr 15. 52, that event brings forth the dead instantly incorruptible, with bodies immortal and glorified in that very moment. This is because the Judge will have determined beforehand who they are He accounts worthy to attain to that resurrection from among the dead (see note p. 80). At this second resurrection the judicial proceedings and verdict are to follow the act of resurrection and determine whether life or death is to be the portion of each.

Ques. 5. *What is meant by "books being opened" and by the "book of life"?* This has been before considered on c. 3. 5, pp. 102 ff. It is a terrific thought that precise, indisputable records are available to declare what have been the doings of each intelligent creature. As evidence they are indestructible and incorruptible, and on them destiny is based. This judgment will be personal, individual, according to works done. Not on the ground of inheritance from Adam will any one be consigned to the lake of fire, but each will receive according to his works, whether good or bad.

Taking all the passages which treat of this momentous matter, it would seem probable that every man's name has been written in the book of life, but that sin, loved and maintained, causes that name to be blotted out; and if, when this last assize of the universe arrives, that erasure still stands, life is for ever forfeited and only wrath remains.

Ques. 6. *What, in relation to the dead, is the distinction between the sea, and death, and Hades?*

The two latter have been distinguished in earlier Scriptures, but the difference is not always marked. In Ps 6. 5; 18. 5; 116. 3: Pv 5. 5: Song of Songs 8. 6: Is 38. 18 the connection of the two is so close as to admit of small distinction. In Ps 49. 14; 55. 15 Death is as the shepherd that conducts the fated flock to Sheol (=Hades). This seems the force of Rv 6. 8. The connection is likewise close in Is 28. 15, 18, where the covenant of the godless of Israel is made equally with Death and Sheol. In Hk 2. 5 Sheol and Death are equally insatiable. In Hs 13. 14 the distinction seems clearer: "I will ransom them from the hand [=grip] of Sheol; I will redeem them from Death: O Death, where are thy plagues? O Sheol, where is thy destruction?" But when this passage is cited in I Cr 15. 54, 55 only Death is named: "O Death, where is thy victory? O Death, where is thy sting?"; and the distinction is lost.

In Jb 26. 6; 28. 22: Ps 58. 11: Pv 15. 11 Sheol is associated with Abaddon (Destruction); and in Rv 9. 11 the angel sovereign of the Abyss (which is the region of which Hades is a part: comp. Ac 2. 27 and Rm 10. 7), is named Abaddon, that is Destroyer. This may at least suggest a ground for distinction: that Hades is the place of detention of the dead in general, but Death or Abaddon that of such as have been destroyed by violence as a definite judgment from God, in distinction from those who die in more usual ways. In various places where this Destroyer is shown acting it is as the executor of signal divine wrath on special

sinners. For example, Ex 12. 23 : II Sm 24. 15, 16 : II Kn 19. 35 : Ek 9. 1-7 : Rv 6. 8 ; 9. 1-11.

From II Pt 2. 4 and Jd 6 it is clear that angelic beings will come up for judgment at this last judgment session of the universe ; and the former passage shows that the ancient belief that Tartarus is the prison of certain angels who rebelled against the Most High God has foundation in fact.

As to the sea, it is to be observed that it is disjoined from Death and Hades by separate and prior mention : "The sea gave up the dead which were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them." The two latter are associated, the sea is distinct from both. It has been suggested that *demons* are a disembodied pre-Adamic race of inhabitants of this earth, who through sin fell under judgment in pre-historic times, and that the sea is the prison of many of these no longer allowed liberty. The theme is discussed in Pember's *Earth's Earliest Ages* (68 ff. In ed. 15, 61). It certainly seems clear that it cannot be the *bodies* of the drowned of our race which the sea here gives up ; and as to the *souls* of men, these, as far as we see from Scripture, all go to Hades or Abaddon. As remarked above, there is no hint that the "dead" are embodied when they stand before the throne. They appear as *dead* persons, and it is only while disembodied that men, at least, are said to be dead, and this appears to be the case with spirit beings also ; for Satan, originally clothed in glory and beauty (Ek 28. 12, 17), must now metamorphose himself to appear as an angel of light (II Cr 11. 14) ; and the craving of demons to occupy bodies, even of swine, if driven out of men (Lk 8. 32, 33), suggests that these also have been deprived of bodies formerly possessed.

It is only after being acquitted by the Judge that bodies of *life* are bestowed at the second resurrection, even as it is only after being approved by Him that the body of *glory* of I Cr 15 is conferred at the first resurrection.

On the whole, it would seem probable that the dead the sea gives up are not human beings.

Ques. 7. *What is meant by Death and Hades being cast into the lake of fire?*

It is difficult to conceive of two *localities* being cast into a third locality. But in Ps 49. 14 "Death shall be their shepherd" ; 55. 15 "Let Death seize [Darby] upon them" ; Is 28. 15. 18 "We have made a covenant with Death, and with Sheol are we at

agreement"; Hs 13. 14 "O Death, where is thy sting? O Sheol, where is thy destruction?"; Rv 6. 8: "he that sat upon the horse, his name is Death, and Hades followed with him," Death and Hades are personified, that is, the spirit rulers of these regions are in view. It must needs be so, since *places* cannot be shepherds, make covenants, or ride horses. See above on Abaddon, the Destroyer and Angel of the Abyss.

It is simple to think of these two dread angel beings being consigned with their leader Satan to his and their doom. It is the same expression as has been before used of the Beast, the False Prophet, and the Dragon being cast into the same place (19. 20; 20. 10). Having fulfilled their dread offices of Executioner and Gaoler respectively, they now meet the long-threatened doom of their age-long and persistent rebellion under the leadership of the Dragon.

This seems to be the more probable seeing that the sea is not cast into the lake. The nature of the figures forbids, since a lake could scarcely contain a sea; and moreover, no evil angel of the sea is mentioned in Scripture. The sea simply disappears in the final, universal conflagration.

Ques. 8. *What is the Lake of Fire?*

It is only as these closing scenes of universal history are described that the lake of fire is mentioned in the Word of God. But the conception was by no means new in John's day or original to his book. *The Book of the Dead* has frequent mentions of a pool or lake of fire as a region of the underworld and as the final sphere of those condemned at the judgment of the dead, and it is similarly termed "the second death" (e. g., pp. 111, 128, 201, 325, 326).

(i) It would seem that it must be a *locality*, for finite beings, having restricted size and form, cannot be nowhere or everywhere, but must be somewhere. (For the same reason heaven must be a locality, not merely a state.)

(ii) The fire and brimstone cannot be material, for it is not material forms that are cast thereto. See above, Ques. 6. Material fire does not hurt spirit beings. The fire at Sinai was presumably as literal as the cloud, tempest, and voice of trumpet, but, being spirit as to their substance, the angels that mediated on that occasion were not hurt thereby (Ac 7. 53: Hb 2. 2). Nor was the angel hurt when he ascended in the flame of Manoah's sacrifice (Jg 13. 20). But there must be agents as potent to hurt the spirit form as fire and brimstone to torment the body; and the nature of the figure used, a lake, suggests that the element is

fluid, penetrating, enclosing, inescapable, fearfully adapted to its required purpose. That there is a fire appropriate to angels is seen from the chariots of fire that Elisha twice saw (II Kn 2. 11; 6. 17).

This lake is local, circumscribed, as every lake must be. It is in existence before the Millennium, for the Beast and his Prophet are cast there at the descent of the Lord (c. 19. 20). It is distinct from the Abyss and Hades, because it is out of the Abyss that the Beast is brought to rule the earth and is later cast into the Lake. Similarly, Satan is cast first into the Abyss and after the thousand years into the Lake (20. 3, 10). Since the "goats" of our Lord's prophecy (Mt 25, 46) are dismissed to "the fire the eternal prepared for the devil and his angels," that fire must be this lake of fire, which again shows it to be in existence at the time when Christ comes in glory to sit on the throne of His glory (Mt 25. 31).

In Mt 18. 9, 8, the "Gehenna of fire" is also termed "the fire the eternal." Thus Gehenna is the same as the "fire the eternal" of Mt 25. 41, and therefore as the lake of fire, so that what is stated of the former will reveal features of the latter. The general notion of a place of disgrace and terror may well have been borrowed from the valley of Hinnom, called Gehenna by the Jews, where the bodies of more atrocious criminals, deprived judicially of the decency and respect of burial, were cast out to be burned with the offal of Jerusalem. But our Lord intended more than this, even a reality in the world of the dead. For in Mt 18. 8, 9 and Mk 9. 43, 45 He contrasts being "cast into the Gehenna of fire" with "entering into life," and in Mk 9. 47 with "entering into the kingdom of God." He taught moreover that Gehenna is a place where the *soul* can be destroyed: "fear Him who is able to destroy soul and body in Gehenna" (Mt 10. 28). Now this could not be effected by the fires in the valley of Hinnom; but it is solemn ground for fearing God who controls both heaven and hell. See also Lk 12. 5.

It is doubtful whether in these places the Lord spoke of the punishment to follow the great white throne. For this casting into Gehenna is said to be "after God hath killed the body," in contrast to the impotence of man to do more than the latter. Correspondingly, it is doubtful if the entrance into life and the kingdom of God here in view looks to the eternal and perfect state to follow resurrection, and not rather to that "very far better" experience for which Paul longed instead of continuing in the toils and pains of this world (Ph 1. 23). For it is difficult to conceive

that the perfected body of heavenly glory will be maimed by want of hand or foot or eye ; but this is easy of conception as to the state directly after death, since it is clear that the soul has another " body " than the one of flesh that it vacates at death. When the medium at Endor saw Samuel she saw that he was old and that he had a robe that covered him. Her description was so true that Saul, who had known Samuel, was sure the prophet had appeared to her (I Sm 28). So also Dives in Hades had eyes, ears, and tongue, and Lazarus and Abraham were recognizable by him. This subtler covering of the soul is thus a recognizable counterpart of the grosser body of matter, and so can presumably partake of its defects, until, in the case of the believer, these signs of death shall be finally swallowed up and lost in the full victory of resurrection. Then a " habitation which is from heaven," a permanent and perfect body, shall take the place of the tattered tent which is of this earth (II Cr 5. 1, 2), and thus Christ shall subdue all things unto Himself, including the humiliation to which as yet the believer is liable through his body (Ph 3. 21).

James 3. 6 requires notice. The tongue is a fire : it setteth on fire the wheel, that is, the whole revolution of nature, meaning that the whole round of daily life can be inflamed and ruined by heated speech, so becoming a revolving wheel of sin. But the tongue itself derives this burning, destructive quality from evil spirits, " it is set on fire by Gehenna." May there not be here a hint that the fire of Gehenna at least includes a vehement, passionate, all-devouring, uncontrollable spirit, which rages and blasts, but never exterminates itself or the object it sets on fire, but is a worm that never dies and a fire which never dies down, because the vehicle on which it works, the souls of men or the spirits of angels and demons, is itself indestructible ?

Even in this life men are consumed by tormenting passions, cravings, memories, and conscience. Even in Hades Dives knew this torment as he thought upon his brothers whom he had set so evil an example.

Ques. 9. *Where is the Lake of Fire ?*

I do not find this stated distinctly. The ancient heathen conception placed it in the realm of the dead under the earth. The close connection noted in OT between Sheol and Abaddon does not correct this but is rather to the same effect. The passages as to Gehenna are not more specific, save as they leave unchallenged the popular idea. The five places in *Revelation* (19. 20 ; 20. 10, 14, 15 ; 21. 8) are equally indefinite, save as they assume the

earlier scriptures as basis. The problem involved is this : If the Lake is in the earth what will become of it when the earth is finally dissolved by fire ? It is shown plainly that the sea, Death, and Hades cease to be ; but what of the Lake ? Nor is it easy to conceive of it as in the new earth, since of this it is stated that it is to be the dwelling of righteousness. Yet the torment of the worshippers of the Beast by fire and brimstone is said to be "in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb" and is to be for ever and ever (c. 14. 10, 11) ; which reads as if it must be somewhere adjacent to the angelic realm. Till this question can be answered plainly from Scripture the devout student will be cautious in stating positive assertions and conclusions about the Lake of Fire. There is something yet to be learned, and the present writer will welcome all light upon the subject.

Ques. 10. Does the Lake of Fire annihilate those cast therein ?

(i) It is to be remembered again that *apollumi* and *apôleia* (translated destroy, destruction, perdition, perish, waste, lose) do not in Scripture mean to bring to an end the substance of the article, but to render it useless, of no value for its intended purpose ; as a sheep lost (Mt 10. 6 : Lk 15. 4, 6), or a skin withered (Mt 9. 17), or ointment wasted (Mk 14. 4).

(ii) This is supported by the fact that the Beast and the False Prophet are cast into the Lake at the commencement of the thousand years of Christ's reign (19. 20), and they are still there when Satan is cast there after the final rebellion. As a millennium of years of the action of this fire has not ended their existence, what ground is there for supposing that a billion years would effect this ?

(iii) The next following and concluding statement is that "they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (1) This implies not only existence, but consciousness. (2) "Day and night" is a proverbial expression for uninterruptedness, no cessation. (3) The phrase "for ever and ever" requires full examination.

A. The Old Testament. Here it is applied :

(a) To the duration of God's supremacy and kingdom (Ex 15. 18 : Ps. 10. 16 : Dn 7. 18) : to the throne and life of Messiah (Ps 45. 6 ; comp. Hb 1. 8) : to the perpetuity of God's works, and warnings and precepts (Ps 111. 7, 8 ; 104. 5 : Is 30. 8) : to the duty of keeping His law (Ps 119. 44) : and that praise is due to Him for ever (Ps 45. 17 ; 145. 1, 2, 21 : Dn 2. 20 : etc.). In all these cases the phrase plainly denotes everlastingness.

(b) It is applied to the duty and blessedness of trust in God (Ps 48. 14 ; 52. 8 : Mc 4. 5), and to the reward of leading others to fear God (Dn 12. 3). Here also the expression denotes everlastingness.

(c) It is also applied to the destruction of the wicked : Ps 9. 5. The psalm is millennial, and it is declared that the wicked persons in view have been destroyed and their name blotted out for ever and ever.

B. The New Testament is to the same effect.

(a) The Hebrew of Ps 45. 6 is rendered in Hb 1. 8 by " Thy throne, O God, is unto the age of the age." Both times the noun is singular, " age," but the nature of the subject compels the sense of everlastingness, and confirms this as the force of the Hebrew.

(b) In the Epistles the same phrase in the plural (*εἰς τοὺς αἰώνας τῷν αἰώνων*) is used seven times in ascribing glory, honour, praise, and dominion unto God (Gl 1. 5 : Ph 4. 20 : I Tm 1. 17 : II Tm 4. 18 : Hb 13. 21 : I Pt 4. 11 ; 5. 11).

(c) This same expression comes eleven times in the *Revelation*. In 1. 6 ; 4. 9 ; 4. 10 ; 5. 13 ; 7. 12 ; 10. 6 ; 11. 15 ; 15. 7 it refers to the life, glory, sovereignty, worship of God and the Lamb and cannot mean aught but unlimited duration.

(d) In 22. 5 it is used of the sovereignty of the heavenly saints, " they shall reign for ever and ever," and as these are to reign with Christ, their dominion will co-exist with His.

(e) In 19. 3 it is applied to the judgment on Babylon the great, " Her smoke goeth up unto the ages of the ages" ; in 20. 10, of the Beast, the False Prophet, and Satan, it is said : " They shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" ; and in 14. 10 it is threatened by an angel that they who worship the Beast shall share his judgment, for they shall be " tormented with fire and brimstone," the same agents of punishment as mark the lake of fire, " and the smoke of their torment goeth up unto ages of ages," the same phrase without the articles (*εἰς αἰώνας αἰώνων*). It may be hard to say why the angel used the shorter phrase, but, if our sense of language is true, the simple expression " unto ages of ages" expresses endlessness even more definitely than does the longer phrase. Indeed, a Cypriot, an educated man, whose native language is Greek, assured me in Palestine that to a Greek ear the shortest term of all, translated " for ever," is more emphatic than even the duplicated phrase rendered " for ever and ever," though the latter necessarily means endlessness.

After all that has been argued as to the force of *aiōn* (age), there seems no good ground for giving to it, in relation to the punishment of the wicked, any less force than it has in the scriptures

cited in all other connections, and especially when the same writer in the same book uses it without any qualification to diminish its meaning.

That competent classical scholar, Dr. Richard Weymouth, held the doctrine of annihilation. He discussed this subject with my relative, Rev. George Goodchild. They finished by considering Mt 25. 46, "These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Dr. Weymouth said: All I can say about this verse is, that philologically eternal punishment is not in it, but theologically it must be! This simply means that taking *aiōn* as it stands in secular literature, and this as understood by a modern westerner, the term means a limited period, but taking it in the light of its Scripture usage, connections, combinations, and teaching, it has the force of everlastingness.

Scholars of Weymouth's day were accustomed to treat the NT too much as if it were classical Greek. Later research has corrected this, and if one were to write thus to-day he would be open to the criticism of Dr. W. R. Inge as in *Things New and Old*, p. 103: "the popular doctrines of future probation, and of the ultimate salvation of all men, are not only without the slightest warrant in the New Testament, but are contradicted by recorded sayings of our Lord. Arguments to the contrary based on the supposed meaning of the word *aiώνιος* [*aiomios*] only prove that the disputant is a poor Greek scholar."

This was written against the doctrine of universal salvation, which leads to our next Question.

Ques. 11. *Will all intelligent beings be at last saved?*

Every compassionate heart would surely be glad to embrace this hope did Scripture justify it. Not to canvass all arguments and all scriptures, it may suffice to say that the last preceding discussion, if well-founded, by proving the everlastingness of perdition, disallows universal restoration. The Judge upon this throne would surely have declared unequivocally that all will be saved at last were this to be, for He suffered unto death to make restoration possible. But this final assize closes with the wicked being cast into the lake of fire, and not a word throws a ray of light or hope beyond that event, or weakens the solemn threatenings that have preceded.

Nor does Scripture seem to afford hope that the dread torments of the lake of fire are remediable and will effect that repentance which preceding warnings, entreaties, grace, forbearance, and discipline have failed to produce. In the case of Satan, angels, and demons, we know not how many millenniums on millenniums

may have given to them opportunity to humble themselves before the Most High, but without avail. In the case of man we do discern a perpetual process of hardening of heart through the deceitfulness of sin. This may become inveterate, invincible, irremediable, so that under the most terrific and painful plagues men do not repent but rather blaspheme God (c. 10. 20, 21 ; 16. 21). Whatever dread experiences Antichrist himself may have had in the Abyss have not changed him, for he will issue thence to act for Satan and lead mankind to blaspheme the true God ; nor will a thousand years in the lake of fire improve him and his Prophet, for their punishment is to continue thereafter for ever and ever. Demons knew Christ to be the Son of God, feared lest He had come to torment them before the time, but showed no sign of repentance (Mt 8. 29 : etc.). Of men it is said that they may " be guilty of eternal sin " (Mk 3. 29). If the sin be eternal, how can its punishment be shorter ? And so on the very last page of inspiration there stands this most solemn sentence : " He that is unrighteous [in practice] let him do unrighteousness still : and he that is filthy [in nature] let him be made filthy still " ; which seems as much to point forward into perpetuity as do the accompanying words : " he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still : and he that is holy, let him be made holy still." These sentences stand in immediate connection with the End Times, being preceded by the words " the time has drawn near " and followed by the words " Behold, I come quickly ; and My wages with Me, to render to each man as his work is."

Ques. 12. "*Lord, are they few that be saved ?*" (Lk 13. 23).

A profoundly interesting question ! But Christ left it unanswered, and pressed the urgency of personal zeal to enter by the narrow door. He did, however, warn that " many " would seek to enter and be unable. But it is not for us virtually to supply our own answer and assert that " many " means that the *vast majority* of the race of mankind must and will be for ever lost. Scripture provides no data for this conjecture.

But what it does say is most significant and a relief to the subject. Speaking of man simply as man, without distinction of race or religion, it shows in Rm 1 that men gave up God and God could not but give up them. Then in c. 2 it again addresses every man without distinction, whether heathen or Jew, by saying " O man, whosoever thou art." It declares two principles of the divine and final judgment as follows :

(1) The one who " despises the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and longsuffering " and acts from " a hard and

impenitent heart," "treasures up for himself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." He being factious, and obeying not the truth (that is, such measure of truth as he may have known; whether from nature around, or that universally implanted sense of right and wrong, "the work of the law in the heart," or from conscience), but obeying unrighteousness as the guiding principle of conduct—to such an one God will render "wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish." These are four strong and fearful words, such as prepare the mind for the final picture of that wrath, the lake of fire.

(2) But on the other hand, equally emphatic, and equally addressed to "every man," is the assurance that "to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption," God will "render eternal life," even "glory and honour and peace to every man that doeth good." And both the wrath and the peace will be awarded "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (ver. 16); and both actions are part of the good news as preached by Paul, little as they may appreciate this to be good news who rebel against the doctrine of eternal wrath.

It is not said that the second class of persons *find* while on earth a life that is glorious, honourable, and incorruptible, but only that they *seek* it. Such as have moved among unevangelized people (and there are plenty of such in these western lands!) and have observed with care and sympathy, have not so seldom met such earnest seekers. They seem to us to be few in comparison; but we do not know all hearts, nor do we know what the grace and Spirit of God may go on effecting right on to the day of judgment indicated. We are to cultivate Paul's confidence that "He who hath begun a good work" in any soul will go on to "perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ," not only until the day of death (Ph 1. 6). And the final issue of His work may bring many blessed surprises, even as the issue of human and angelic obduracy may bring sad disappointments; for many that have been first in opportunity shall at last be last in attainment, while many that are last shall be then first.

An upright judge deals with the culprit according to his own knowledge of law, not according to the culprit's ignorance of law, and so sometimes he sees ground in law for acquitting one verily guilty of the act charged. Thus will God deal with men according to His own knowledge of the value of the atoning work of the Saviour for all men, and He may see ground in law to extend the benefit of that work to some who may not have known of it in this life, such as infants, imbeciles, and those who in much

darkness of mind had at least longed after that type of life to which the cross of Christ gives access to faith.

It is to be much observed how deliberate and defiant is the sin of those threatened with ultimate wrath. They condemn what nevertheless they practise, that is, they sin knowingly and are self-condemned (Rm 2. 1-3); they positively despise the goodness of God (ver. 4); they are hard and impenitent, factious, and actually disobedient to truth known, even as it had been before said, they "hold down [i.e., suppress] the truth in unrighteousness" (1. 18), obeying the latter right willingly. Similar are those who will have their part in the lake of fire as described in Rv 21. 8 and 22. 15. They are the cowards ($\delta\epsilon\iota\lambda\circ\delta$ comp. II Tm 1. 7: Dt 20. 8 and Jg 7. 3, LXX); unfaithful ($\dot{\alpha}\pi\omega\tau\circ\delta$ comp. Lk 12. 46); the loathsome, detestable, disgusting ($\beta\delta\epsilon\lambda\circ\tau\tau\omega$, comp. Ps. 119. 163, LXX), murderers, fornicators, sorcerers (dealers in magic), dogs (wild, foul livers), idolaters, and all liars ($\psi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\eta\circ$ one who is utterly, deceitfully false).

That there are all too many such is, alas, the fact; yet it is not for us to condemn every sinner as being so appallingly evil as to be irreclaimable. Each who seriously seeks light shall reach it, while he who refuses it now courts darkness for ever. The sin which makes condemnation certain is to reject or neglect Christ; but these attitudes imply that He has been adequately presented to the man. Who can affirm that this has been done to vast numbers in even England, not to speak of less evangelized regions?

Ques. 13. Will there be saved persons at this judgment?

Without hesitation we answer, Yes.

(i) The Romans passage just reviewed declares that it is "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" that eternal life will be granted to those who sought it.

(ii) The present passage states it, for it is only those whose names are not found in the Book of Life who are cast into the lake of fire. The form of the statement can really mean nothing less than that some names are found in that book: "If the name of any person was *not* (emphatic) found . . . he was cast, etc." As I have written elsewhere, were it said of a great crowd at a railway barrier that if any one was found *not* to have a ticket he was not allowed to pass, the unquestionable force would be that some had tickets. To mean the opposite the statement should be, "as their names were not found written . . . they were cast into the lake of fire." Indeed, the form of the statement, as applied to a crowd at a barrier, would mean practically that but

few were without a ticket and the many had one. This has bearing upon the last Question, but it is not wise to base much on an inference of this kind.

(iii) All who will have died during the just preceding Millennium will be present at this judgment. We take Is 65. 20 to imply death of both godly and wicked during that age. See also Ps 48. 14 (text) and 72. 14, both millennial.

Ques. 14. What form or procedure will be followed at this assize?

Considering the countless myriads involved it would take almost eternity to try each case separately and consecutively. But even in this life we experience that, by His secret action upon the conscience, the Spirit of truth does at one time arraign and convict vast numbers separately before the bar of God. It can be thus at each of the several sessions of the judgment seat of God, including this last occasion.

What a profound and concentrated book is the Bible ! What an array of deep and urgent problems is suggested by these five short verses ! Yet for some preachers the brief paragraph seems only a proof passage to enforce the doctrine of eternal punishment, though in fact in itself it does not directly pronounce upon this solemn question.

And now let us by deliberate effort divest our thoughts of all these weighty questions, and quieten and retire the mind while we read again the passage itself, so that its majesty and solemnity may awe the heart, and the effect designed by the Spirit of truth be produced in conscience and practice.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne ; and books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life : and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it ; and Death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them : and they were judged every one according to their works. And Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

Do I *really* believe this ? Do I so really believe it that I am urgent in warning my fellow-men to flee from this coming wrath ?

CHAPTER XVIII

NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH

(C. 21. 1-8)

I. NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH.

The “fleeing away” of heaven and earth takes place at the opening of the last judgment, but their dissolution by fire must be at its close, because it is to effect the “destruction of ungodly men” (II Pt 3. 7), which must therefore be after their condemnation at the opening of the books. The judicial proceedings ended, the Judge utters the last almighty order, at which heaven and earth burst into flames and disappear in the roar and rush of an universal fire. Then, at His word, heaven and earth are made anew.

This making anew is compared to the changing of a garment: “as a vesture shalt Thou change them” (Ps 102. 26). The same figure and expression are in common use. When an old garment has been taken to pieces, cleaned, and remade, we say, “It is a new coat.” This is a proper sense of *καὶ νός καῖνος*, as when the one who has been changed by regeneration is said to be a “new creature,” though he is still the same individual (II Cr 5. 17: Gl 6. 15). In this sense heaven and earth will be new, having been dissolved, purged by fire, refashioned, and made wholly righteous.

Matter is not inherently evil, as an ancient philosophy taught; yet the divinely delicate perception of the Holy One detects defilement in matter which has been used by sinful beings as the sphere and agent of sin. Thus the *land* of Canaan was defiled by the abominations done by its inhabitants (Lv 18. 25, 27). See also Nm 35. 33: Dt 21. 23: Jr 16. 18: and often. Thus “the earth is polluted under the inhabitants thereof” (Is 24. 5), and, by reason of the sin of angels, “the heavens are not clean in His sight” (Jb 15. 15). We know well that sin has brought corruption into the body of man, and that physical contact can infuse disease into bodies, food, water, vessels, houses, drains, and the dissolution of matter is thereby accelerated. This was the basis of parts of the hygienic legislation of Moses (see Lv 11. 33, etc.; 12; 13; 15). It was why a leprous house must be pulled down, and why metal spoils taken in war from the dissolute heathen nations must be purified by fire (Nm 31. 23).

By the persistent sin of angels and men the whole universe has been thus infected and corrupted, in its whole structure, including the realms of the dead ; and whilst the divinely virtuous sacrifice of the Son of God cancels the *guilt*, for both earth and heaven (Cl 1. 20 : Hb 9. 23), the *corruption* that produces defilement and disintegration must be arrested and removed by fire, the appropriate and efficient agent. It is not said that the things "under the earth" are cleansed. They are not, but they cease to be after giving up the dead.

Thus on this colossal and universal scale will God "in wrath remember mercy" (Hk 3. 2), and the issue shall be new heavens and new earth in which righteousness alone shall dwell, and defilement, decay, and destruction be no more known.

2. THE TABERNACLE OF GOD.

The holy city, new Jerusalem, will be considered in the next chapter. Here it is to be noted that:

(i) It constitutes a tent-dwelling of God. Must not this figure intend a contrast with His own proper and eternal palace in the upper heavens ? In addition to that His original and remoter residence God will henceforth have this new dwelling in connection with the renewed earth. He will tabernacle with them in this tabernacle.

It is noteworthy that in this picture of the final and permanent relation of God to the earth the later symbol of a *temple*, a solid and fixed building, is abandoned and there is reversion to the earlier and lighter structure, the *tent* of meeting. This was foreshown by a picture of millennial times, which themselves will be a foretaste of eternal days. When Jehovah shall have purged Jerusalem by judgment and burning (an earlier illustration of the final universal purging by fire), then He "will create over the whole habitation of mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night : for over all the Glory shall be as a marriage canopy" (Is 4. 4, 5 ; see Lowth, and Baron, *Zechariah* 68). The picture is borrowed from the decorative canopy under which bride and bridegroom sat on the wedding day. It refers to the reuniting of restored Israel to intimate relation to their God, as it is written, "I will betroth thee unto Me for ever . . . in faithfulness" (Hs 2. 19). This will have its correspondence in the eternal and heavenly state, for the city is compared to "a bride adorned for her husband."

(ii) This canopy of glory over Zion reaches its perfect fulfilment in the eternal state when the holy city becomes the abode of God above the earth. Now for such an airy, floating canopy the tent

is the appropriate term, rather than the temple, the nature of which figure would require a firm base of solid ground, as of a weighty, immovable building. And consistently with this, in Isaiah's picture the canopy is next described as a booth (Heb. *succoth*), a light structure to afford shade and covert.

(iii) For the heavenly Jerusalem is not fixed on the earth, but is located over the earth, with its centre above the earthly Jerusalem, as is shown by the canopy being above Zion. Only on the understanding that on the new earth there will be a Jerusalem, the centre of Israel as the earthly people of God, and saved nations associated therewith, can full and plain meaning be given to the very many passages which describe the covenant, the possession of Canaan, and the salvation and sovereignty of Israel by the terms *everlasting* and *for ever*. (See Gn 17. 7, 8, 19 ; 48. 4 : Lv 24. 8 : Nm 25. 13 ; comp. Ek 44. 15, millennial : Is 45. 17 ; 51. 11 ; 54. 8 ; 55. 13 ; 61. 8 : Jr 31. 5 ; 32. 40 : etc. ; etc.). It is by the same word that the Scripture describes as everlasting the nature, sovereignty, and kingdom of God (Ps 90. 2 ; 100. 5 ; 145. 13 : Pv 8. 23 : Jr 10. 10 : etc. ; etc.). And thus of Israel God has said : “I will betroth thee unto Me *for ever*” (Hs 2. 19), for “I have loved thee with *eternal* love” (Jr 31. 3), the word being the same in the two passages, showing that the final union of Israel with God is to be as enduring as the love that effects it. This is wholly consistent with the unchangeability of God's character and covenants, and that these latter were given in the foreview of eternity according to which He plans and acts. Also, it is but reasonable that there being a new earth, and the saved of the former nations transferred thereto, the supremacy among them should remain with that nation to which the King of the whole earth belongs by His human birth.

(iv) But not with Israel only will God then dwell, but all the peoples of the earth shall be His peoples and He their God, and so shall be fulfilled to the utmost His covenant with Abraham that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed (Gn 12. 3). What a blessed contrast is this to the former history of the nations ; for all of them have revolted from the only true God and have worshipped false gods, personal or impersonal, to His dishonour and their misery.

3. And then shall it be known in rich and endless gladness that “blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah” (Ps 33. 12), for the banishing of sin shall banish the effects of sin ; and tears, death, mourning, crying and pain shall cease for ever, for “the former things are passed away,” and all things have been made new. They will be the same things, even the same

persons that formerly sinned and sorrowed ; yet they shall be new creatures in new conditions. This again illustrates the force of *kainos*.

To the mind of blinded man this may seem only a lovely but quite impossible dream-idyll. But it is the "One that sitteth upon the throne" who has determined it shall be, and He has endless resources and unwearying love and patience, and the thoughts of His heart shall stand fast unto all generations (Ps 33. 11). To Him the future already is, and He declares calmly to John, and to us, that "these words are faithful and true" and that the things promised have already come to pass (*γέγοναν*) (ver. 5, 6) : for He is the eternal One, who embraces all time, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

4. Yet no heart may or could enjoy that world of righteousness unless animated and ruled solely by the Spirit of holiness Who is the eternal energy of that realm. Yet if this ravishing prospect may have made any heart to thirst after such bliss, to him the One sitting on the throne, the Giver of all good, offers the encouraging promise, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." His own Spirit is this water that imparts and sustains life (Jn 7. 39). He is a *free gift* to each who comes and drinks, by believing the faithful and true words of life. And each may come, not to some remote rivulet at a distance from God, good though that were if no more were possible ; but he may draw near to the Fountain itself whence all life flows ; that is, each believer may know direct access to God, through Jesus Christ, by the Spirit (Eph 2. 18). The ancients talked of fabled fountains, the drinkers at which lived long ; but this true water of life becomes in a man a fountain of water springing up unto life eternal (Jn 4. 14).

5. Life eternal is the common property of all the saved, or they would not be of the saved. But life, in all its forms and spheres, admits of degrees. Some Christians, alas, live at only a "poor, dying rate" ; some lay hold upon life, seize upon its powers and opportunities as upon a treasure, develop these fully, and reap the increase. Some sheep live indeed, yet profit little by their pasture, and are little credit or pleasure to the shepherd ; others fulfil His desire and have abundant life. Some bury their Lord's money ; others multiply it. Some come not to the help of the Lord against the mighty ; some fight the battles of their Captain, even unto death.

To the latter nobler prospects are opened. He that conquereth shall be an "heir," one who owns and controls the parental estate ; he shall be a "son," not a "child" still in the nursery or school.

Both these dignities are possible to every one who has life in Christ : " All things are yours ; and ye are Christ's ; and Christ is God's "—heirship (I Cr 3. 21-23) : " ye are all *sons* of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus " (Gl 3. 26). Of all is this the truth as regards status and possibilities.

But believers are warned, solemnly and repeatedly, of the possibility of failing to inherit (I Cr 6. 9 : Gl 5. 19-21 : Eph 5. 1-14), and also of sons turning back experimentally to the elementary stage of childhood (Gl 4. 8-11 : Hb 5. 12-14). The highest is open to each : the one overcoming shall attain to it ; even as it is written : " heirs indeed ($\mu\acute{e}v$) of God, but ($\delta\acute{e}$) joint heirs with Messiah, if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together " (Rm 8. 17), and again : " *If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him* [that is, be ever in His immediate company] ; if we *endure*, we shall also *reign* with Him " (II Tm 2. 11-13. See my *Firstborn Sons*).

6. It is appallingly solemn that this summary of the eternal state, of its newness, bliss, and glories, is closed by the Spirit of truth and grace with the reminder that, on the contrary, to the impious " *their part* [shall be] in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." The heart could wish that the vision closed on the radiant heights, but instead it sinks to the darkest depths. Why ?

Note 1. How the saved pass through that final conflagration, and are transferred to the new heavens and earth, I do not know. But, as we have seen, material fire does not harm spirit beings, and the saved of mankind will then be in resurrection bodies.

Note 2. "The sea is no more," no longer ($\omega\acute{v}\kappa\ \acute{e}ti$). Being primarily the instrument of wrath (Gn 1. 2; 7. 11), the sea has no place in a new and sinless earth.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HOLY CITY

(Cs. 21. 9-22. 5)

There is no disharmony between the grace of God and His wrath. The same angel may pour out a plague and then display the glories of the bride (21. 9).

The seer had heard the marriage of the Lamb acclaimed (19. 6-9), but he had not seen the bride. Later he had noticed that, as to its adornment, the holy city resembled a bride (21. 2), which combination of the two symbols suggests some correspondence between the bride and the city. At length the angel promises that he shall be shown the bride, the wife of the Lamb (21. 9). But the fulfilment of this is that he is shown a city (ver. 10). It is disputed whether the description is (*a*) simply pictorial, symbolic of the glories and offices of the persons who will form the bride; or is (*b*) a description of an actual city of the form, size, and materials named, to be the abode of the persons who form the bride; or (*c*) is it a combination of both?

i. Opinion (*b*) is unacceptable from inherent difficulties. Is it really to be believed that there exist in the upper realm vast masses of solid gold, of which angels have measuring rods and streets are made? If it be asserted that there are pearls so large that a single one suffices for a gate proportionate to a wall some 230 feet high, we are induced to reflect how huge must have been the oysters in which they grew, how vast the ocean where such oysters lived, and to wonder where in the heavenly region that ocean is situate.

One ingenious literalist observed that a square of the size given as the base of the city will fit nicely into a circle of the size of the moon, and he proceeded to infer that the location of the city will be on the opposite side of the moon to that which faces us.

But this opinion (*b*) cannot be carried through consistently without doing violence to figurative language. As shown above the River of the water of life is, as we conceive, incontestably a figure, namely, of the Spirit of God. But this feature being a symbol, so will be that of the "tree" that grows by the River, with its "fruit" and "leaves," and the healing qualities of the latter, as well as the broad *plaza* through which the "River"

runs ; and by consequence the other details also will be symbolic.

2. But these figures having behind them realities of the spirit world will not the rest also have corresponding realities, and there be a veritable "city," though of a spirit order suitable to the world above ? It is quite possible ; and this city may be that one of the many abiding places on high which the Lord has gone to prepare for the faithful (Jn 14. 2). And the reason for the employment of symbols may be that there simply is no other way of creating in our minds any just conception of the reality.

Thus opinion (c) may be true, and it can be supported by OT passages to which this vision answers. For example, chs. 60, 61, and 62 of Isaiah give the feature that the earthly Zion and the earthly Israel are addressed with a sort of intertwining of the terms used ; now it is the one, now the other that is addressed, and both the city and the people are regarded as a bride adorned for her Husband.

This finds some further support in the former NT mentions of the new Jerusalem (Gl 4. 21-31 : Hb 12. 18-24 : Rv 14. 1).

In the Galatian passage the Jerusalem then existing, and in servitude with the Jewish race, her children, was a reality pre-figured by the slave-woman Hagar and by mount Sinai, whence issued the law, which, through the sheer inability of human nature to keep its precepts, imposed only bondage. But Sarah, the free-woman, and Isaac, her free-born son, prefigured the heavenly Jerusalem and the free children of God born under grace. The nature of the analogy requires that this Jerusalem be as actual as was the other and as Hagar and Sinai, Sarah and Isaac. Yet this scripture gives no information as to *what* may be the reality intended by the term "Jerusalem that is above."

In the Hebrews passage the heavenly Jerusalem corresponds again to Sinai and must be conceived as being equally a reality, and the more that all the other connected features are realities, that is, the blood, the covenant, its Mediator, the spirits of just men, the Judge, the firstborn, and the angels. But here also no notion is conveyed as to the nature of the "city of God," and no more can be inferred than that this must correspond to the nature of God, of angels, and of glorified men, that is, that as these are by substance spirit, not of matter, so must be the heavenly city.

It is thus in the third passage (Rv 14. 1). The Lamb is localized and so are the 144,000. As remarked before, persons with local presence must be in a place. This place is here termed "Mount Zion," but what this term describes is not shown, though it can be inferred that in dignity and use it answers to Mount Zion at Jerusalem, which was (a) the royal dwelling, (b) the centre of

worship, (c) the seat of government, (d) the heart of the empire (Ps 122. 1-5). These features are found in our present vision : (a) 21. 3, (b) 21. 22, (c) 22. 1, 3, (d) 21. 24-27; 22. 14.

Yet admitting that persons will have a suitable place of dwelling, it still does not follow that the description before us is that of the dwelling place rather than of the persons, and certainly opinion (a) is the view of the vision which yields more practical moral instruction. It is more important that we should know the character, service, and honours of the heavenly Israel than of the heavenly Zion, even if the latter be a reality. And surely this view is implied in the strict correspondence of the phrases : "I will show thee the bride . . . and he showed me the city"; for the "bride" is a company of persons, and therefore the "city" should represent persons. This does not transgress the canon that a symbol cannot be explained by a symbol, because the angel did not offer to *explain* to John the symbol "bride," but simply to *show* him the bride. It is a second vision of the same subject. It is common in Scripture to employ several symbols of one theme, no one of them being adequate to give a full conception. For example, in this book Christ is both lamb, lion, star, root, etc. As here, when John has been told he shall see a bride he is shown a city, so in c. 5. 5 though a lion has been mentioned he is shown a lamb (ver. 6).

The Greek *πόλις polis*, "city," is used quite as regularly for the inhabitants as for the place. Mt 8. 34; 11. 20; 12. 25; 21. 10; Mk 1. 33; 6. 11; Lk 4. 43; Ac 13. 44; 14. 21; 17. 5, 16. The same is true of the Latin *civitas* and its English derivative *city*.

3. The following suggestions may help study of the details of the "city."

(i) *Its descent out of heaven*, having the glory of God. "When Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory" (1 Cor 3. 4, and see 1 Th 2. 12; 1 Pt 5. 10).

(ii) *Its light like jasper* (21. 11). Resemblance to God the Father (see 4. 3). Also clearness, transparency : comp. Ph 1. 10; II Pt 3. 1; 1 Cr 5. 8; II Cr 1. 12; 2. 17, "sincerity" (*εἰλικρινής -εια*), that which examined in the sunlight (of God's presence) is found pure.

(iii) *The Wall.* (a) Security. Is 26. 1: "salvation will He appoint for walls and bulwarks."

(b) The foundations of the wall. The church of the firstborn ones is built upon the foundation of the truth taught by the apostles, and by prophets who learned from them (Eph 2. 20). Hence the names of the apostles are seen on the foundations

(ver. 14). As Paul laboured in the founding of churches more abundantly than all the other apostles, perhaps his name will be one of the twelve when the church is completed, though he was not one of the twelve of the very first days of her history.

(c) The jewels ornamenting the foundations correspond so closely to those seen on Satan in his original glory and to those on the breastplate of Israel's high priest (Ek 28. 13 : Ex 39. 10-14), as to suggest the office of king and priest, representing before God all the saved, over whom they will rule and for whom they will mediate.

(d) 144,000. As seven is connected with heavenly completeness (c. 1. 4, seven churches, representing one complete church : seven angels : etc., etc.), so is twelve connected with completeness in man's affairs (e.g. twelve tribes of Israel making one complete nation). 12 multiplied by 12 will thus suggest complete completeness, perfect perfection ; and this perfection carried to the highest degree, even as 1000 was the highest figure in the enumerating of Israel (tens, fifties, hundreds, thousands, Ex 18. 25). See on c. 14. 1.

(iv) *The Gates.* Access and Thanksgiving. Is 26. 2 ; 60. 11, 18. (a) It will be by contact with the glorified saints that the peoples will have access to God and to His blessings. They will be priests unto God, leading the praises of the universe and radiating the light of the knowledge of His glory. Comp. Dn 12. 3 : "And the teachers shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." As I wrote on this verse in my *Daniel* (p. 194) : "The teachers diffused the light of truth in the time of thick darkness, and hereafter shall radiate brightness as the atmosphere disseminates and tempers the brilliant sunlight, dispersing the direct and scorching rays into every nook and cranny, but softened and cooled, so as to benefit and not to injure. Is not this a striking hint of the priestly, intermediate function of the glorified saints, in fellowship with the Son of God, even the diffusing in their persons something of the presence and glory of God, so as to be a blessing to those who could not themselves endure the direct blaze of His unveiled glory ? These shall themselves 'see His face' ; others will see Him in them as in a 'tabernacle' (Rv 22. 4 ; 21. 3)." Already the godly are this in measure (Mt 5. 14-16 : Ph 2. 15, 16) ; then they will be so fully and eternally. The nations shall walk under their instruction, and shall render to them due honour (21. 24, 26). In the ideal it was thus of old with the priests in Israel : they were to be the teachers of God's law, and were to receive from the people His portion of their substance.

(b) But on earth Israel will have the chief position, and the nations must own this and serve them (Is 60. 12-16). Therefore the gates, the means of access to the heavenly people, bear the names of the tribes of Israel. God is a God of order, and has graded the universe rank on rank as He sees to be best for each realm. Sin has disturbed the balance by causing the higher ranks often to abuse their powers at the expense of the lower orders. This drives the latter to attempt to reduce society to a uniform level. But sin in each human heart still frustrates this attempt at betterment, for as soon as the lower attain power they in turn become tyrannical. In the kingdom of God the plan of God is maintained, the universe will still be graded ; but love will banish selfishness, the higher will serve the lower, and harmony and joy prevail, so that the lower will honour the higher, and God be praised by all.

(c) Angels stand at the entrances, protecting Israel and attending upon heavenly saints, as guards of honour at palace doors (Hb 1. 14).

(d) The gates are of pearl. Right of access to God is of supreme value, like to the preciousness of pearls (Mt 13. 45, 46).

(e) The gates open to the four quarters of the heavens, which signifies the universality of the blessings available through the heavenly saints. The defiled are excluded from the city, but no one else.

(v) *The city is a cube* (21. 6), which geometrical figure, being formed wholly of right angles, presents equality and perfection of shape from every view-point. This may suggest the perfection of the saints in both actual righteousness and appearance, all according to the divine standard, the golden measuring rod.

The above remarks on the number 144,000 may suggest that the number 12,000 indicates the completeness of the whole church, from whatever angle of thought it may be viewed.

After reading various attempts to portray a literal city of this form and dimension, I still fail utterly to form the vaguest conception of an actual city as a cube, on every side as high as it is broad and long, or even as a pyramid, each slope of which is of the same length as its base line, or of a tapering tower as high as the length of its base line, with a street encircling it from base to summit. (This last conception is set aside by the word for street, *πλατεῖα plateia*, meaning "broad place," "square." Comp. the derivatives, Italian *piazza*, French *place*, German *Platz*.) That a city can be so shaped is to me, at least, so unimaginable as to decide that this chapter is not a *description* of anything concrete.

(vi) The measuring of land or property is always a suggestion that some person is taking detail account of it with the view to possession and control. This "city" is to be God's personal dwelling, and this is the occasion when He will enter upon possession in person.

4. The seer notices seven *negative* features, of things common to cities but absent from this city.

(i) There is *no temple* (21. 22), no special spot where the Deity must be sought. The temple provided approach to God but debarred access to Him. The Holy Spirit thus signified that the way into the immediate presence of God was not yet made manifest, was not thrown open to all. But God in the midst of His people will be accessible. In that realm of perfected relationship each who approaches to a glorified saint shall find God in him. Then shall be realized completely the words that shall be true of the earthly Jerusalem after an earthly manner, "The name of the city shall be Jehovah Shammah, Jehovah is there" (Ek 48. 35). Then shall that be known in manifest reality which in measure the church reveals even to-day, "God is among you indeed" (I Cr 14. 25). Then shall be known in unrestricted blessedness the power of the Saviour's words, "The hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father . . . true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth" (Jn 4. 21, 23). Such worshippers as the Father is now seeking He will then have found in fulness.

(ii) There is *no external light*, as of sun or moon (21. 23). The glorified shall know the full force of the promise, "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah" (Jr 31. 34), and also what this other word includes shall then be fully developed, "And as for you, the anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as His anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in Him" (I Jn 2. 27).

(iii) *No lamp*. There shall be no need of man-made lights, as of a lamp (21. 23). He who is even now the Light of the world shall be known as such in perfection by the saints of those high places: "the lamp thereof is the Lamb." It is to be much observed that, to all eternity, in heaven and on earth, the Lamb remains the lamp, the light-bearer, from whose face the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines forth over the universe.

These last two features are emphasized by repetition in 22. 5. At present saints are called by God to enlighten one another, by books, conversation, discourse, holding forth the word of life (Ph 2. 15, 16), and by good works (Mt 5. 14-16). The reason for this is because, as yet, we see the Lamb, the light, but dimly, and in differing degrees, and therefore the more enlightened in experimental acquaintance with Him can help to illuminate minds less enlightened or wholly dark. But the glorified shall know Him by direct spirit-consciousness, and of each such that word shall be fully true, "if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light" (Mt 6. 22).

This unclouded knowledge of God shall be dispersed by saints over the whole race: the nations shall learn of God from His heavenly people, and the kings of the earth shall honour these their instructors (21. 24). Already those very few rulers and races that have consented to learn from the servants of God, out of His Word, have found it a great gain: then this shall be so universally.

(iv) *No night.* In consequence of fulness of light there shall be no night, this also being emphasized by repetition (22. 5). Ignorance of God shall not again fling its black pall over the minds of the glorified as in the former time of their ignorance, inducing the moral unhealthiness which the light of the Sun of righteousness alone can heal. But perpetual light will demand perpetual vigour to endure it. Frail mortality requires the night for recuperation of mind and body. In that perfected state this shall no more be so, for none shall say, I am sick, either in soul or body. The resurrection man is full of power (I Cr 15. 43).

(v) *The gates shall not be shut* (21. 25). There shall be perfect security, and unrestricted access to God in His people.

(vi) *Nothing unclean* shall on any account enter. No unclean thought shall sully the mind, no unclean desire clamour for indulgence, no unclean being, angel, demon, or man, shall approach to tempt. Oh, what a ravishing and rest-giving prospect is this to one who has caught even now a glimpse of the loveliness of holiness as seen in the Lamb of God.

(vii) *No curse.* Again by consequence, there shall be no more curse (22. 3), for there shall be nothing that demands that the Holy One shall curse it. So shall perfect bliss and perfect blessedness prevail for ever in perfect fellowship with the Father and the Son.

Oh happy day when we no more
Shall grieve Thee whom our souls adore;
When sorrows, conflicts, fears shall cease,
And all our trials end in peace.

Oh happy day when we shall see
 And fix our longing eyes on Thee,
 On Thee our light, our life, our love,
 Our all below, our heaven above.

Oh happy day of cloudless light,
 Eternal day without a night :
 Lord, when shall we its dawning see,
 And spend it all in praising Thee ? (J. G. Deck.)

5. It enhances the effect by contrast that seven *positive* features are given of the life glorified.

(i) *The River of the water of Life.* Jn 7. 39 declares that when Christ spoke of rivers of living water He referred to the Spirit of God : " This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him were to receive." This appears to apply to every place in Scripture where living water is used as a type. To drop in the present place the beautiful figure is to reduce the passage from the sublime to the ordinary. But as before remarked, this river being a symbol, so must be its accompaniments, and the whole vision. An essential truth here revealed is, that to all eternity, and in every realm of the universe, the Spirit of life is the life of the spirit in all who live.

Now this River is shown here as flowing through the City, which is the final and richest fulfilment of the Lord's promise quoted above, that the believer shall be the channel through which the Spirit of life shall become available to others. It is of the River as flowing through the City that the nations shall drink.

(ii) *The Tree.* In the Adamic Eden (Gn 2. 7) there were two special trees, those of knowledge and of life, and in addition there were trees beautiful and trees fruitful. These all depended upon the river for their vitality. All this will find its highest fulfilment in the glorified church, in their knowledge, life, beauty, and usefulness ; and all this in them will be by the Spirit.

This application of the figure of the tree to man follows Ps 1, the second passage where the river and the tree are seen together. There the godly man is himself the tree ; and it is shown that the meaning and the secret of being planted by the river, that is, of drinking in uninterruptedly of the Spirit of life, is heart-delight in the law of the Lord.

In the third passage where the tree and the river are seen (Jr 17. 7, 8) the lesson is varied and enforced. A real, working trust in God is given as the secret of the communion of the Spirit, assuring beauty, fruit, and superiority to adverse influences.

In the fourth Scripture (Ek 47) the special truth taught is that the river flows down past the *altar*. There had been no Pentecost

had there been no Calvary : atoning death opens the way to the gift of life. This is taught equally by other figures. It was only upon the blood that the anointing oil might be placed (Lv 14. 17), and it was with oil and blood mingled that the priest must be sprinkled and sanctified (Lv 8. 30).

“ I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.”

In this fifth and last passage (Rv 22. 1) the river flows out of the *throne*, which is essentially the same lesson as in Ps 1, even that full submission to the royal authority of God is the condition of fellowship with His Spirit, for it is to them that obey Him that God giveth the Spirit (Ac 5. 32). The kingdom is to be brought into complete subjection to God not only for His glory but for its own welfare.

(iii) *The throne of God and of the Lamb.* The glorified saints will be the supreme instrument for the display of the divine authority and for the administration of the whole kingdom : “ the saints shall judge the world,” including angels (I Cr 6. 2, the *cosmos*). Having learned to obey they shall rule : having full knowledge of the laws of the kingdom they shall administer these.

It is the throne of God and of the Lamb jointly, one throne, one sovereignty, and this for ever, even as it was before said, “ the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah ; and He shall reign for ever and ever ” (11. 15). To deny the equality of the Son with the Father would subvert the economy of the universe at its very summit. This negatives the idea that the Son will cease to reign when He shall have subdued all things unto God. Just as the “ up ” of II Cr 12. 2 and 4 is not warranted by the Greek *harpazo*, so in I Cr 15. 24 the verb *paradidomi* does not warrant the rendering “ He shall deliver *up* the kingdom to God, even the Father.” This “ up ” imports a more absolute handing over of the kingdom than is intended. The sufficient force of the word is seen in ver. 3 of the same chapter (I Cr 15), where Paul says, “ I delivered unto you the doctrines which also I received.” He did not cease to retain the teachings by handing them on to others. Part of the importance of this is, that if the Son should cease to reign then it could not be that His heavenly people should reign for ever, as is declared of them (22. 5). The subordination of a son to a father (an eternal fact in the Godhead, for the inner relationships of the Deity can never change, or God would not be unchangeable,

not eternal) does not hinder a royal father making his son co-regent of the kingdom. It were a fitting reward if that son had suppressed a dangerous rebellion.

(iv) *The servants.* His slaves (*οἱ δοῦλοι*) shall render to Him the service due to God (*λατρεύσοντιν αὐτῷ*). Though exalted to the throne they continue to be His slaves. Thus in Ps 45. 11 it is said to the Queen in reference to the King, "He is thy lord, and worship thou Him." The Lord said to the Eleven "I have called you friends" (Jn 15. 15); but evermore they, shunning the irreverent familiarity of some moderns, called themselves His slaves (Gl 1. 10 : Eph 6. 6 : Ph 1. 1 : Tt 1. 1 : II Pt 1. 1 : Jd 1 : Rv 1. 1 : etc.). Willing slaves they were, serving out of love, but slaves. This relationship is inherent in the very constitution of things: the creature ought to be the slave of its Creator; but when it is divine love that exacts service, and responsive love that renders it, the relationship and the term are relieved of all the bitter and disgraceful elements that attach in the case of a creature being reduced to slavery by a fellow-creature.

(v) *They shall see His face.* In Persia there were seven princes who "saw the king's face" (Es 1. 14). Herodotus narrates that the seven nobles who conspired to overthrow the usurper Smerdis agreed that part of their reward should be the right of unrestricted access to the king, save when he might be with one of his wives (Bk 3. 84). Thus to "see the king's face" meant freedom of access to his immediate presence at all times, a high privilege not available to others.

For man to become capable of such access to God requires that heavenly body which is granted at the first resurrection or by rapture. Man as he is, with a body of the earth, is not capable of enduring the unveiled splendour of the divine Majesty: "man shall not see Me and live," not even the friend of God, Moses (Ex 33. 20), for God is dwelling "in light unapproachable, whom no one of mankind [ever] saw, neither to see is able" (I Tm 6. 10). The earthly nature would shrivel under that intense light, for "flesh and blood is not able to inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cr 15. 50). But unfallen angelic nature can support that vision of God: "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 18. 10); and such as attain to the resurrection from among the dead, become equal unto the angels, being *sons* of God by being sons of the resurrection (Lk 20. 34-36). This attaining demands that "sanctification without which no one shall see the Lord" (Hb 12. 14). The "Lord" here is the Father, since every eye is to see the Son at some time.

Even Mohammed had caught a glimpse of this supreme honour and felicity. The delights of paradise promised in the Koran to the faithful Muslim are grossly sensual : " but all these enjoyments will be lightly esteemed by those more blessed persons who are to be admitted to the highest of all honours—that spiritual pleasure of beholding, morning and evening, the face of God " (Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, 80).

At the time that the Son of God said that certain angels behold the face of God, He was not himself in heaven displaying that glory : therefore it was before the Father personally that these angels stood and it was the face of the Father they beheld. Let us, too, esteem this the highest of honours and give all diligence to be accounted worthy of it.

Eternal Light ! Eternal Light !

How pure the soul must be,
When, placed within Thy searching sight
It shrinks not, but, with calm delight,
Can live, and look on Thee.

The seraphs that surround Thy throne

May bear the burning bliss :
But that is surely theirs alone,
Since they have never, never known
A fallen world like this.

Oh, how shall I, whose native sphere
Is dark, whose mind is dim,
Before the Ineffable appear,
And on my naked spirit bear
That uncreated beam ?

There is a way for man to rise
To that sublime abode :
An offering and a sacrifice,
A Holy Spirit's energies,
An Advocate with God.

These, these prepare us for the sight
Of Holiness above :
The sons of ignorance and night
May dwell in the Eternal Light,
Through the Eternal Love ! (T. Binney.)

(vi) *His name on their foreheads.* The high priest in Israel bore on his forehead a gold plate inscribed " Holy to Jehovah " (Ex 39. 30, 31). Thus he was separated visibly from general life and dedicated wholly unto God. In this office he was the representative of the whole people. He bore the iniquity of the holy

things which the people set apart for God, so that they might be accepted by the Holy One. It is in the spirit of this that the heavenly saints, in association with the High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, shall be priests unto God and act with reference to His rights and to the gifts offered to Him by the nations, as well as be dispensers of His gifts. Comp. Hb 5. 1. On the earth the saved of Israel will hold similar office (see Is 61. 5, 6), so realizing at last one of the earliest post-redemption promises to their race (Ex 19. 3-6).

How shall a Christian sincerely expect that name to be placed at last on his forehead if he does not bear it now morally, by living before men a life of whole-hearted dedication to God ?

Name means also character ; it being on the forehead implies visible resemblance to God, in character and glory.

(vii) *They shall reign for ever.* They shall be kings as well as priests. Disciplined to obey in the school of suffering, they shall prove qualified to rule in glory. Self-serving wholly eliminated, they shall be true kings, serving God in serving the true interests of His and their subjects. For God himself is the chief Servant of the universe ; God's King moved among men as the Servant (Lk 22. 27) ; and for ever true for kings are the words of Solomon's sage elders to the vain king, his son, " If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words unto them, then they will be thy servants for ever " (I Kn 12. 7). Let each who aspires to reign with the Son of man in His kingdom walk now in His steps, by bringing himself, with Paul, under bondage to all (I Cr 9. 19) ; because inflexible, as a law of the entire universe of moral beings, is this repeated dictum of the Lord of all, " Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled ; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted " (Mt 23. 12 : Lk 14. 11 ; 18. 14).

This is the bride, the wife of the Lamb, this the glory of the church completed and triumphant. Truly eye saw not, ear heard not, nor did ever enter the heart of man " whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him " (I Cr 2. 9, 10). But it says not that *these* things are prepared for such as place in Christ a faith for deliverance from hell beneath, but who, like Simon the Pharisee, develop but little *love* for the Deliverer (Lk 7. 47), because their sense of sin being feeble their gratitude for pardon is small. No ; the kingdom is promised to them that *love* God (Js 2. 5) ; it is to them that *love* Him that even now God works all things together for good (Rm 8. 28). And the test and proof that we love God is that we keep His commandments (I Jn 5. 3).

Until that glorious marriage day the believer is a betrothed virgin (II Cr 11. 2), and it is for her to set her affection undividedly on her Beloved, lest love should wane, as at Ephesus of old (Rv 2. 4), and as shall be prevalent as this age ends and the bridal day nears (Mt 24. 12, 13).

But for those whose love to Christ burns ardently to the end, and triumphs over all seduction and opposition, what bliss of intimacy with Him awaits, what glory in His kingdom, what noble service in the universe ! What inexpressible joy it will be

To look within and see no stain,
Abroad no curse to trace ;
To shed no tears, to feel no pain,
But see Thee face to face.

To find each hope of glory gained,
Fulfilled each precious word ;
And fully all to have attained
The image of our Lord.

For this we're pressing onward still,
And in this hope would be
More subject to the Father's will,
E'en now much more like Thee. (Mrs. Peters.)

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

1. Is this vision millennial, eternal, or both ? Certainly it is eternal, for the throne of God, the dominion of the Lamb, and the sovereignty of the saints are for ever and ever. But it is also millennial, because the marriage of the Lamb takes place just before He comes forth to set up His kingdom on earth (19. 6-8). Perhaps this explains why the nations need healing ; for the millennial age is not perfect ; at its commencement, throughout its course, and at its close, sin still exists. But healing issues in being healed, and the beneficent ministries of the saints shall issue in the perfect condition when there shall be no more curse.

2. Eternity will not annul time. The rendering of c. 10. 6, "there shall be time no longer," has suggested to some minds an unphilosophical notion. The RV mgn. "delay" gives the right meaning. No finite mind can ever think *eternally*. Only the divine mind can do this. The creature must ever require periods of time to enable it to locate events and to think coherently. For the finite intellect eternity must ever be divided into periods. A mighty angel, or a glorified saint, may conceivably grasp the duration of a vastly longer period than man can now understand, but for the creature there must always be "ages of ages," continuing without end. Therefore in this "city" there are still

"twelve months," and therefore there are years, that is, succession and rotation, that is, *time*.

3. Let this vision stand as the Biblical picture of what *God* means by people "going to heaven." It is considerably different from the popular conception that "heaven" is the only alternative to "hell," and that "being saved" is the same as "going to heaven." On this present earth during the millennium, and on the new earth in the eternal ages, "the nations of them that are saved" shall enjoy the blessing of redemption by the precious blood of Christ; yet these will live on earth, not in the regions above, in heaven.

The heavenly portion is for that limited portion of the saved known to Scripture as "the church of the firstborn ones who are enrolled in heaven" (Hb 12. 23). (1) Their calling to this superior dignity is of grace. (2) Their pathway to it is marked by sharing the sufferings of Christ. (3) Their attaining thereto is the reward that grace will give for the sufferings which grace enabled them to bear unto the end. They might have avoided the sufferings, as in fact many, alas, do; in which case they would have fallen short of the grace and have forfeited the reward.

For faith is a living seed out of which can be developed by the diligent virtue, knowledge, self-control, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never stumble [that is, on the pathway of suffering to the eternal glory to which the God of all grace called you in Christ]; for thus shall be RICHLY supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ . . . Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen" (II Pt 1. 5-11 : I Pt 5. 10 : II Pet 3. 17, 18).

Oh what a bright and blessed world
This groaning earth of ours will be,
When from its throne the tempter hurled,
Shall leave it all, O Lord, to Thee !

But brighter far that world above,
Where we as we are known shall know ;
And, in the sweet embrace of love,
Reign o'er this ransomed earth below.

Oh, blessed Lord, with weeping eyes,
That blissful hour we wait to see ;
While every worm or leaf that dies
Tells of the curse and calls for Thee.

Come, Saviour, then, o'er all below
Shine brightly from Thy throne above ;
Bid heaven and earth Thy glory know,
And all creation feel Thy love. (Sir E. Denny.)

CHAPTER XX

THE CONCLUSION

(C. 22. 6-21)

The mighty Drama is finished. The seer had been shown the stages by which the Lord God, the Almighty, will accomplish His purpose to establish new heavens and new earth wherein only righteousness shall dwell, and for ever. The dealings of God with the Gentile peoples, the fulfilment of His covenants with Israel, the completion of His purposes concerning the church, had been depicted, and all preceding prophecies of the Scriptures had been co-ordinated and completed. It remained only to conclude the record of all this, and the Conclusion is a fitting and finished work, from both the spiritual and the literary view-points. For convenience it may be studied to profit in seven short sections and a Benediction, as shown by the paragraphs of the RV. Not, however, that we suppose John to have designed this feature, or that it is essential ; rather may spiritual profit be perhaps better served by groupings of ideas and statements.

I. The *Revelation* is *Reliable* and *Inviolable*.

(a) *Reliability*. "These words" (6) can hardly apply to the vision of the "city" alone, for that was *seen*, rather than given by words ; so that the expression will include the whole Unveiling. This being given by God, as the One who controlled and informed the spirit of every true prophet, must needs be dependable and true. Nor was it left to John to do his best to grasp the purport of the inward movings of God : an angel was commissioned to aid the prophet's comprehension by "showing" the events, the mind being made to "see" that which was being imparted. Sight and hearing gave precision to the understanding and to the imparting of the divinely wrought inward motion of the spirit of the prophet. John adds his own solemn assurance that the vision was no invention of his own imagination, but that he did verily see and hear what he had written down.

C. 1. 1 states distinctly that it was Christ who sent His angel to show these things unto John. The title here, "the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets" as He who sent the angel,

will therefore mean Christ : a notable testimony to His deity. This agrees with Peter's word that it was the Spirit of Christ who spake in the prophets (I Pt 1. 11).

(b) *Inviolability*. The source of the *Revelation* being God the Lord, the book must needs be inviolable, unchangeable ; and any tampering with its contents, by addition or deduction, is blasphemous and intolerable (18, 19).

The Lord Jesus had guaranteed to the apostles (Jn 16. 13) that the Spirit of Truth (His own divine Spirit) should "guide them into all the truth," the truth entire ($\tauὴν ἀληθειῶν πᾶσαν$), that is, the whole of the truth that God proposed to reveal to men ; and that He should show them not merely "things to come" (AV), but "*the* things coming" ($\tauὰ ἐρχόμενα$), that is, all coming events that were to be made known. This promise had now been fulfilled, and so the solemn warning here appended follows as a natural consequence.

The formerly reserved plan of God concerning the church had been revealed as to the *doctrine* of it, as, for example, through Paul. Thus the *message* of God to man had been completed, as Paul said (Cl 1. 25), for it was his to "complete the word—the message—of God" ($πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ$) : and now to John the *vision* of the church, as the wife of the Lamb, had been given, set in connection with the program of God for heaven and earth in the ages of the ages. Thus revelation of truth is complete, for nothing can lie *beyond* the *eternal* state. Nor can God possibly devise any higher glories for the creature ; for He will exalt the chosen of them to *sit with* His Son on His throne, and it can never be that any shall be exalted *above* the Son.

Therefore any pretended further revelation of truth must needs be false, and the offering of it will incur the plagues described in the *Revelation*. On the other hand, to remove aught that God has revealed will impugn the perfectness of His unveiling and impair it, and this gross presumption shall forfeit any possibility of sharing the blessings of that perfected state pictured by the city and its tree.

Both of these damnation-assuring offences have become common in this age. False prophets and prophetesses offer fresh revelations foreign to Scripture, and profane "theologians" throw away portions of the Book as, in their opinion, inaccurate or useless. Both the Romish doctrine of there being an apostolic "tradition" of at least equal authority with Holy Scripture, and the rationalist theory that there is post-apostolic, continuous inspiration, add to Scripture ; and the infidel denial of miracle, and therefore of the miracle of the future being foretold, cuts out

of the Bible all prophecy. And while in the strict letter the threats of this terrible warning apply to the *Revelation*, yet inasmuch as this portion of the Book of God is rooted in, interwoven with, and is the completion of all the Word of God, it becomes impossible to tamper with this final book without maltreating what had been given of God before ; and conversely, any wrestling and twisting of earlier scriptures will inevitably involve false treatment of the *Revelation* and so the incurring of the judgment here denounced.

But the statement that it is " the plagues that are written in this book " that will fall upon the tamperer with the words of God seems to involve that such profane persons will be specially to the fore in the End Days of this age, for it is at that time that most of these plagues will be inflicted. Some judgments are indeed eternal, and will be the portion of the profane ; but of the close of the age the Lord gave very solemn warning that " false Christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall show great signs and wonders ; so as to lead astray, if it be possible, even the chosen " of God (Mt 24. 24). Therefore the urgency to-day, in view of the already arisen false prophets, and of the advance of this evil age, of John's other warning : " Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God ; because many false prophets are gone out into the world " (I Jn 4. 1).

2. *The Time Element.*

Daniel had been directed to " shut up the words and seal the book " and this was to continue " even to the time of the end " (Dn 12. 4) ; but to John the word is, " Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book ; for the time is at hand " (or, " the season is near " : ver. 10). From Daniel, when the prophecy was to be sealed, to John, when it was to remain unsealed, was about six centuries ; from John until our time is over eighteen centuries : in what sense, then, was the season near to John's day ? The crucial importance of this question on the whole outlook of the *Revelation* demands a decision by the student as to the sense of the phrase " the season is near." Three suggestions have been made :

- (i) That the apostles spoke as men who thought that the end of this age and the return of the Lord were then just at hand. This has been refuted in our Preliminary Dissertation 2.
- (ii) That the Bible being God's book, time is described from His own point of view, and that to Him to whom one thousand years are as a day it is natural to speak of two and a half thousand

years as a "very little while." This is reasonable from the divine standpoint ; yet the Bible has also a human element and was written for man's instruction, so that its utterances must be consistent with these features also, in order that the human understanding may be enlightened and not darkened.

(iii) The two passages quoted from Dn 12 and Rv 22. 10 taken together are significant. Since prophecy was to be sealed *until* the *End* Time, and that season was "near" when John was directed *not* to seal prophecy ; and since actually, as measured by centuries, it was very far off from John's own day, must not the explanation prevail that the speaker and John had been alike transported forward in spirit unto that End Time, so that to their consciousness the season was indeed near ? And does not this at once follow from and confirm the rendering of c. 1. 10 : "I was in spirit in the Day of the Lord"? And is not this supported by the Lord's use of the very words "it is near" (*ἐγγύς ἐστιν*) in His prophetic foreview on Olivet (Mt 24. 32, 33) ? He said : "when ye see all these things, know ye that He (or, as margin, 'it,' the season for accomplishment) is near, even at the doors." This affords a divine comment upon our phrase, and shows it to mean that the events in question are as close as is a man standing before a door expecting it to be opened. How can this have *any* relation to an interval of nearly two thousands of years ? Does it not compel the view that the speaker and hearers have been projected in thought to the real epoch for fulfilment ? This agrees with the fact that those things of which Christ had spoken do clearly belong to the End Times, for they include the abomination of desolation, the Tribulation, and His coming in glory immediately to follow.

As has been shown in Preliminary Dissertation 2 there are passages in OT which require the same explanation, of the speaker having been carried forward in spirit, so that he spoke in terms suitable to that far-forward standpoint. In a glowing passage descriptive of the invasion of Palestine by the Assyrian, his destruction, and the then restoration of Israel, Isaiah (10.25) said : "For yet a *very little while* the indignation against thee [Israel] shall be accomplished, and mine anger shall be directed to his destruction." In another passage, as plainly of the End Times, for "the terrible one is brought to nought," and Jacob "shall sanctify the Holy One," Isaiah (29. 17-24) said : "Is it not a *very little while* and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field ?" In similar terms Haggai said (2. 6, 7) : "For thus saith Jehovah of hosts : Yet once, it is *a little while*, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land ; and I will shake all

nations ; and the precious things of all nations shall come ; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts."

These statements were made some two and a half thousands of years ago. They were repeated in Hb 10. 37, some eighteen centuries ago, in the words : " For yet *a very little while* the Coming One shall come, and shall not delay." Evidently that inspired writer did not regard an interval of five or even seven centuries as inconsistent with the earlier statements. In what sense, then, did he understand them ? Human language does not admit of seven hundred years being a very little while. As Scripture must be fulfilled, an interval of twenty-six centuries cannot prove to be delay on God's part. But this really means that the mind must go forward to the period which the prophecy contemplates, not backward to the time when the prophet lived. Standing in thought in that future era, the statement is correct in even human language ; while regarding it from the time when the prophet lived it seems impossible to defend it as being accurate. Nor does there seem any other way of understanding fairly and naturally the Lord's words (Mt 24. 34) : " This generation shall not pass away till all these things be accomplished " : the meaning being, " This generation to which I am directing your minds forward," *not* " This generation in which we are living," for in no sense were the words fulfilled of our Lord's contemporaries.

This principle applies to the words of the angel found at c. 10. 6 : " There shall be delay no longer." Viewed as an utterance of A.D. 95 there has been a very lengthy " delay " ; but carry forward the mind to the days of the seventh trumpet, and no delay has arisen, for the time-point of the utterance has not yet arrived.

This explanation of ver. 10 harmonizes with the statement of c. 1. 1 here repeated (ver. 6), that the events detailed in the *Revelation* " must in their entirety be done with speed."

3. *I Come Quickly.*

So very important is this that the Lord Himself affirms it three times in this short Conclusion (7, 12, 20). In c. 1 it has been pointed out that the word *ταχύ tachy* does not mean *soon* but *swiftly*. It indicates rapidity of action, as is well seen in its accurate use in the medical compound *tachycardia* (*ταχύ* and *καρδία* *the heart*), which does not mean that the heart will beat *soon*, but that it is beating *rapidly*.¹ Of course, the swift action may take place at the very time, as in Mt 28. 7, 8 : " Go *quickly* and tell His disciples . . . and they departed *quickly* from the tomb " :

¹ It is found at Mt 5. 25 ; 28. 7, 8 : Mk 9. 39 ; 10. 8 : Lk 15. 22 : Jn 11. 29 Rv 2. 16 ; 3. 11 ; 11. 14 ; 22. 7, 12, 20.

but the thought is not that they did not loiter, but that their movement was swift. Thus here also. If the Lord be regarded as speaking in the day when John lived, then He did not mean that He was returning *soon*, but swiftly and suddenly whenever the time should have arrived: if He be regarded as speaking upon the verge of, or at the close of, the End Days, then indeed the hour of His coming could be thought of as near, but even so, it is the swiftness of His movement that the word emphasizes.

This lends urgency to the context in each place where the Lord says "I come quickly."

2. 16. "I come to thee quickly . . . and I will make war against them." The threat is of suddenness and swiftness of attack as in battle. Only the fool will risk such an invasion of his affairs by such an Assailant.

3. 11. "I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown"; for My approach will be so swift that you will have no time to recover aught that you may have let slip.

22. 7. "I come quickly. Blessed is the one that is keeping (*ὁ τηρῶν*) the words of the prophecy of this book," that is, the one who is observing them ceaselessly; for My coming will be swift, and will allow not a moment for the lax Christian to resume his interrupted obedience to My words.

22. 12. "I come quickly; and My wages with Me, to render to each man according as his work is" at the moment I appear, not as it *was* at some earlier date. So swiftly shall I burst on the scene that there will be no opportunity to renew former zeal in good works. In Lk 12. 43-46 each steward is dealt with according to what he is doing at the hour of the master's sudden return. How the steward may have acted during the early period after the master had left is not reckoned to his credit, seeing that he lapsed into unfaithfulness and was so found at the return of his lord. To win the crown the racer must *end* well.

Wages according to work! Let this sound principle arrest the heart. Each shall receive hire for work done (*μωρθός* Mt 20. 8: Lk 10. 7: Jn 4. 36: I Cr 3. 8, 14). The justification which delivers from wrath is declared expressly to be of faith, not a reward (*μωρθός*) of works, and to be of grace, not of debt (Rm 4. 4, 5). But the thus justified believer shall thereafter receive as wages just what his work earns, as estimated by the Lord.

20. 20. "I come quickly. Amen, [so] come, Lord Jesus." Only he who is *living* in obedience to and harmony with his Master can so answer from his heart. When this thought of the coming of Christ was pressed upon a certain man of business he

said : If I thought the Lord was coming like that there are some things in my business I would have to put right. He put them right, and then wrote : Now I can say with all my heart : " Amen, come, Lord Jesus." The immediate object of all prophetic teaching is that " every one that hath this hope set on Christ, purifieth himself, even as He is pure " (I Jn 3. 3).

How powerful an effect may this expectation of the sudden and swift intervention of the Lord be expected to have upon His people in the actual End Days, when that intervention will verily be imminent. For it will be known from this passage that the sudden appearing of the Lord will act as a moral fixative : the unrighteous in act, the filthy in nature, will be then hardened beyond change ; the right acting and the holy in character will be confirmed and perfected (ver. 11). Hence the latter, in their zeal to be ready, will wash their robes, and will thus acquire right to the tree of life and to the benefits of the city of God (14) ; whereas the former shall find themselves shut out from all that blessedness and bliss (15). Here once more must be noted the solemn reverting from the happiness of the cleansed to the character and lot of the wicked. The mercy of God will leave nothing unsaid that may turn the wicked from the error of his way by setting before him clearly the final issue.

4. *Christ's Self-presentation.* At the commencement of the visions the glorified Son of Man presented himself to John (c. 1). While dealing with His churches the Lord spoke to them in His own person and of Himself. But as soon as the visions turned to deal with world-affairs the Lord retired, as it were, into the background, and the angel spoke to John about Him and showed His as acting for the Father. Now that the visions have been ended the Lord in person steps again to the front, and speaks personally and of Himself.

(i) And first He declares His deity (13), and by the bold and striking method of appropriating to Himself terms before used of and by God the Father. See 1. 8 ; 21. 6, 7 : " I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

(ii) He declares His humanity, saying " I Jesus " : I am the same who was born of Mary ; I lived and wrought and taught and died on earth ; in the glory of God I am still the same Saviour, unchanged and unchangeable. I am JESUS, and My dearest and immediate care is My churches : and that they may know in advance, and be fore-armed against all trial and seduction, I have sent My angel to testify unto you these mighty, glorious,

terrible, encouraging, yet warning things. " See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused him that warned on earth, much more shall not we escape who turn away from Him that warneth from heaven " (Hb 12. 25).

(iii) I am the root out of which grew up David, the shepherd and king of My people, Israel ; whom I chose, anointed, trained to be My servant, and with whom My covenant stands that his throne shall endure for ever (II Sm 7. 9, 16). I shall yet, at My return to the earth, build again his tabernacle that has fallen (Am 9. 11, 12 : Ac 15. 16-18), and thenceforth the covenant with him shall be the basis of blessing to the thirsty of all nations (Is 55. 1-5) ; for that which is rooted in Me has permanent vitality.

But I am also the *offspring* of David. As he grew out of Me as his divine source and support, so as truly did I grow out of him as to My humanity. I am the Son of David, that shoot out of the stock of Jesse, the father of David, that Branch out of his roots that shall bear fruit on earth unto God by the energy of His Spirit (Is 4. 3 ; II. 1, 2), and through Whom all the counsels of God shall be accomplished unto the blessing of heaven and earth. Through Me, as God's King, shall this all be wrought (Jr 23. 5 ; 33. 15-18 : Zh 3. 8 ; 6. 12, 13). I wish My churches to remember this My office as the One who shall fulfil all the covenants of God with David, Israel, and the nations. Though My churches are the dearest object of My heart, they are not its only object, even as a man's wife is not his only concern, though she is the dearest.

And because I am the Offspring of David, therefore

(iv) I am also the bright, the morning Star, and it is at My rising as this Star that the morning shall dawn upon the world's dark night. (See on c. 2. 3.)

Thus does the Lord Jesus concentrate in His own blessed Person all glories and offices, divine and human, and offer Himself to our hearts to be our love, our hope, our all.

5. *The Threefold "Come."*

" And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.
And he that heareth, let him say, Come.
And he that is athirst, let him come :
He that will, let him take the water of life freely."

The sense of this passage, as to the first two clauses, almost universally accepted is that they are the response of the Spirit and the Bride to the Lord's assurance that He is coming.

(i) This would seem more certain did the response follow directly upon one, and especially were it the last, of the three statements "I come quickly." That the response follows the statement that He is the fulfiller of the promises to David, and is the Morning Star, really negatives the idea, as will be shown.

(ii) It is the first "And" that creates the notion that the sentence is in continuation from what precedes; but this supposed connection with ver. 16 is weakened, if not broken, when the *καὶ . . . καὶ* (*kai . . . kai*) is given the more regular translation, "Both the Spirit and the Bride say Come." See the use in Mt 10. 28 : Mk 4. 41 : Jn 7. 28 ; 9. 37 ; 12. 28 ; Rm 11. 33 : Ph 2. 13 ; 4. 12.

(iii) It has been shown on c. 2. 26-28 that the Morning Star points to the Lord as coming to destroy His enemies, to save Israel, to rule the nations. As the Bride will have been removed to heaven at the commencement of the Parousia, prior to the coming of the Star, she will not be on earth to cry "Come" to the Lord as the Star, for she will be already with Him, and indeed will come with Him as the Star.

(iv) If it be said that the Spirit and the Bride are here viewed as still on earth before her removal, and as crying "Come," it must be urged that, according to Scripture and to fact, the church does not become the "bride" prior to the rapture. It is only at the time of the wedding itself that a betrothed maiden becomes a bride. I am aware that the German usage is opposed to this statement; but it is Scripture usage that is here in question, and, apart from Mt 10. 35 and Lk 12. 53, where *νύμφη* *numphē* means daughter-in-law, in the four other NT places it means "bride," as just about to be married or just having been married. See Jn 3. 29 : Rv 18. 23 ; 21. 2, 9. Comp. the same meaning of *νυμφίος* *numphios* *bridegroom* in its twelve occurrences, and of *νυμφών* *numphōn* *bridechamber* in the three passages where it is used.

5. It results that the other sense must be accepted, and the "Come" be viewed as a triple appeal to the thirsty to take of the water of life. This enables that the sense of "Come" be alike in the three sentences, instead of the first two having one meaning and the third another.

(a) This agrees with the afore-mentioned priestly service of the glorified saints, as God's messengers to the nations (c. 19. 4). Thus will be fulfilled Is 55. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." Is 53 gives the sufferings of Messiah which are

the basis of all blessing : c. 54 gives the restoration of Israel to fellowship with their God ; and c. 55 extends the call of grace to all peoples. The correspondence with our passage is exact. (1) There is a threefold Come : (2) the water is a free gift : (3) he who " heareth " will be granted a share in " the sure mercies of David," a plain connection with our passage, " I am the offspring of David."

(b) " The one hearing," who takes up the cry of the Bride, will thus be such as the saved remnant of Israel and any Gentiles who hear and respond. Is 66. 18-21 contemplates such. It shows that some of those who are gathered under Antichrist against Jerusalem will be spared when his armies are slain. This sparing is not mentioned in Rv 19. 19-21, where the same event is the subject ; which shows incidentally the need that the *Revelation* be read in the light of all preceding prophecy. But Isaiah shows that these spared will be sent back to their own lands to tell there of Israel's King ; with the result that those peoples will go up to Jerusalem to make their submission to Him, to drink of the water of life, to enter into the benefits of the covenant of David, made available to them through David's greater Son.

Thus would the Lord have His own exercised as to this rich privilege and most needy service of offering life to thirsty hearts ; of continuing His own ministry, of echoing His own call " Come unto Me." Why should one who, in this day, has been indifferent and negligent in this labour, think that, in that day, he will be counted fit to be used and honoured in it ? Lk 19. 24-26 is to the exact contrary.

6. *The Benediction.* " The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints."

This holy and rich desire was used frequently as a beginning and ending of apostolic letters. But though usual, it was in no wise formal. In the Lord Jesus God has found a ground and provided a channel for the abundant overflow of His favour to man, guilty man. And out of free favour, that is, as a matter of grace, and on the condition that man humbles himself to accept grace, He has provided in Christ for the entire satisfying of every need in time and eternity. Nor merely for the meeting of need ; but also for the accomplishment of the whole of the good pleasure of His will, the whole of the design of his infinite and gracious mind concerning those sinners who shall repent and submit.

Let not faith stagger at the greatness and glory of these purposes, nor let it waver on account of its own frailty or of the

seriousness of the obstacles or the fierceness of Satanic opposition. For all things that pertain to this life, and to the godliness that marks it, have been already provided and granted by God (Eph 1. 3 : II Pt 1. 1-4), and this on the grandest and most lavish scale possible, even according to God's own riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Ph 4. 19).

Let the believer draw freely upon the grace of the Lord Jesus, and, with Paul, he shall find it sufficient (II Cr 12. 9). But let him remember that by calling he is a saint, a holy person, and let him study with all diligence to be such, holy in body, holy in soul, holy in spirit. And to this end let him remember ceaselessly that it is the grace of the LORD Jesus he needs, which means that the condition of its enjoyment is simple, unhesitating, uncurtailed *obedience*. Yet let him remember also that it is the grace of the Lord JESUS, the Saviour ; Whose precious blood covers all confessed sin and failure, and provides pardon and restoration : JESUS, whose steps when here are to be followed, Whose life by His Spirit is the energy for following them, and Whose human sympathy and divine intercession are always available for the humble. Thus walking as a pilgrim and a foreigner on earth he shall be ever discovering more and more of the grace of God as suited to the desert ; and in due time, the goal of the journey having been reached, he shall be to the praise of the glory of that grace for ever.

“ Oh dare and suffer all things !
Yet but a stretch of road,
Then wondrous words of welcome,
And then—the FACE OF GOD.” (Ter Steegen.)

“ The GRACE of the LORD JESUS be with the SAINTS.
AMEN.”

FINIS.

LIST OF SOME GREEK WORDS

αιών, αἰώνιος, aiōn, aiōnios, 357, 358
 ἄμωμος, amōmos, 238
 ἀναλίσκω, analisko, 274
 ἀναστήσονται, anastēsontai, 42
 ἀπαντάω, apantao, and cognates, 263 ff.
 ἀπέκδεχομαι, apekdechomai, 34
 ἀπό, apo, 90
 ἀπόλλυμι, ἀπώλεια, apollumi, apōleia, 348, 356
 ἀρπάζω, harpazo, 93, 376

διέρχομαι, dierchomai, 111
 δοξάζω, doxazo, 46

ἐκ, ek, 90
 ἐκδέχομαι, ekdechomai, 33
 ἐκφεύγω, ekpheugo, 89
 ἐξαλείψω, exaleipso, 104
 ἐπεσαν, epesan, 268

γρηγορέω, gregoreo, 37

θρόνος, thronos, 138

καινός, kainos, 363, 366
 κατενώπιον, katenōpion, 238
 κατισχύω, katischūō, 207
 κριθῆναι, krithēnai, 190

μάχαιρα, machaira, 158
 μετὰ ταῦτα, meta tauta, 82
 μέτοχος, metochos, 102
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The sweet commingling tints of morn
Lay soft on Galilee at dawn ;
But sea and shore and hills stood clear
As noontide's blazing hour drew near.

Too swiftly fell the eastern night
And shut the lovely scene from sight,
Till stars in myriads shed their ray
And softly paled the gloom to grey.
The moon her full white glory threw,
The shadowy hills all ghostly grew,
Her borrowed radiance saying plain,
" The sun still shines, to rise again :
By faith endure, by hope be strong,
Another day will dawn ere long."

* * *

And thus, O Lord of Galilee,
Thy morning years were sweet to see ;
Commingling hues of every grace
Spread softly o'er Thy heavenly face.
Thy manhood's words and works and
ways

Lit all the land, a noontide blaze ;
But oh, how swiftly fell the night
Of death, by man and Satan's spite.
Thy churches now, with starlike ray,
Relieve the darkness till the day ;
Thy saints, Thy light reflecting, give
Their proof that Thou, unseen, dost
live ;
And soon upon all watchful eyes
Shalt Thou, our Sun, in splendour rise.

*Haifa, after a visit to the Lake,
9th April, 1928.*

QUIET DAYS

We thank Thee, Lord, for quiet days
When waters still are nigh,
And deep we drink of joys serene
Thy love doth fresh supply.

Days when from sorrow's scorching sun
Beneath the Rock we rest,
And way-worn feet and war-worn
hearts
Are strengthened and refreshed.

We know Thee as we do not know
Midst life's alarms and fears ;
In those we prove Thy power to keep,
In these to dry our tears.

Here, far removed from strife of
tongues,
How thrills the soul Thy voice !
Thy angels know Thy blessedness,
And we in Thee rejoice.

And thus renewed we face again
The burning desert way,
Both there as here to find in Thee
Our solace, strength, and stay.

And when with Thee on high we trace
Again the way we trod,
For scorching sun and sheltering rock
Alike we'll praise our God.

*Bydgoszcz, Poland,
4th September, 1934.*

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THE SPEAKER	<i>These things saith He that holdeth the 7 stars in His right hand, He that walketh in the midst of the 7 golden lampstands :</i>	<i>These things saith the first and the last, who was dead, and lived again :</i>	<i>These things saith He that hath the sharp two-edged sword :</i>	<i>These things saith He that hath His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like</i>
IS KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHURCHES AND COMMENDATION	I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them who call themselves apostles and are not, and didst find them false ; and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary.	I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them who say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.	I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is : and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth.	thy works, and thy ministry and past works are n
HIS COMPLAINTS	But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love.		But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner.	I have this ag sufferest the calleth herself a teacheth and se commit fornicat sacrificed to ido
HIS COMMANDS	Remember therefore whence thou are fallen, and repent, and do the first works ;		Repent therefore ;	And I gave her to repent ; and she of her fornicatio
HIS THREATS	or else I come to thee, and will move thy lampstand out of its place, except thou repent.		or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.	Behold, I do q them that com into great tri repent of her w her children wi churches shall k searcheth the n I will give unto in your wor
HIS ENCOURAGEMENTS	But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.	Fear not the things which thou are about to suffer: behold the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have a tribulation of ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.		But to you I s in Thyatira, as in teaching, who things of Satan upon you none of that which ye ha
HIS CALL FOR ATTENTION (first 3 addresses)	He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.	He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.	He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.	
IS PROMISES TO THE OVERCOMERS	To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.	He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.	To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.	And he that keepe my works will I give authori and he shall file iron, as the vise received of my Fa him the mornin
HIS CALL FOR ATTENTION (last 4 addresses)	(see above)	(see above)	(see above)	He that han what the Spiri sa

Analysis

the Seven Churches

Revelation chs. 2 & 3.

HYATIRA write :	SARDIS write :	PHILADELPHIA write :	LAODICEA write :
ngs saith the Son of God, his eyes like a flame of fire, t like unto burnished brass : I know and thy love and faith and patience, and that thy are more than thy first. But s against thee, that thou the woman Jezebel, who self a prophetess ; and she seduceth my servants to nification, and to eat things o idols. ve her time that she should 1 she willett not to repent cation.	These things saith He that hath the 7 Spirits of God, and the 7 stars : I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead.	These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth : I know thy works (behold I have set before thee a door opened that none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name.	These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God : I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot : I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I [threatening] will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou are the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked ; I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich ; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest ; and eye salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. As many as I love I reprove and chasten ; be zealous therefore and repent.
do cast her into a bed, and commit adultery with her tribulation, except they er works. And I will kill 1 with death; and all the all know that I am He who he reins and hearts : and into each one of you accord works.	Be thou watchful, and stablish the things that remain, which were ready to die : for I have found no works of thine fulfilled before my God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear ; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.	Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie ; behold I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly : hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.	(see above)
u I say, to the rest that are , as many as have not this who know not the deep atan, as they say ; I cast one other burden. Howbeit, ye have hold fast till I come. (see below)	But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments : and they shall walk with me in white ; for they are worthy. (see below)	He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments ; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. (see below)	Behold I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me. (see below)
at overcometh, and he that works unto the end, to him uthority over the nations : I rule them with a rod of vessels of the potter are shivers ; as I also have my Father : and I will give rning star. hath an ear, let him hear pirit saith to the churches.	He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.	He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more : and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name.	He that overcometh : I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

A COMPARATIVE

C. 1.	2 and 3.	4 and 5.	6.	7.	8 and 9.	10.	11.
Introduction. The Son of Man in the midst of the churches until ↓	The Churches all through this age leading on to ↓	The closing events of the age. The court of God sits to ↓	The Lamb opens the Sealed Book S. 1. ANTI- CHRIST appears. S. 2. Western powers oppose. S. 3. Scarcity through war. S. 4. Eastern powers enter the strife. S. 5. Antichrist supreme. THE GREAT TRI- BULATION. S. 6. The great DAY OF GOD impending.	144,000 of Israel sealed on earth. A great multi- tude in heaven.	Seal 7. Trumpets 1-4. Tr. 5, Woe 1. Tr. 6, Woe 2. Judgments on Middle East.	The secret Counsel of God to be completed under Tr. 7.	The TWO WITNESSES 1,260 days.
HIS RETURN.	Overcomers reigning with Christ. The MILLENNIUM.	transfer the Kingdom to the Lamb and the Overcomers. MILLENNIUM.					Tr. 7, Woe 3. The divine program reviewed, leading to ↓
							The wicked destroyed.
							The Kingdom God set up. T MILLENNIUM

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE REVELATION

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ne closing ents of the age. he court of od sits to ↓	The Lamb opens the Sealed Book S. 1. ANTI- CHRIST appears. S. 2. Western powers oppose. S. 3. Scarcity through war. S. 4. Eastern powers enter the strife. S. 5. Antichrist supreme. THE GREAT TRI- BULATION. S. 6. The great DAY OF GOD impending.	144,000 of Israel sealed on earth. A great multi- tude in heaven.	Seal 7. Trumpets 1-4. Tr. 5, Woe 1. Tr. 6, Woe 2. Judgments on Middle East.	The secret Counsel of God to be completed under Tr. 7.	The TWO WITNESSES. 1,260 days.	The MAN- CHILD rapt to God's throne. SATAN cast out of heaven. He attacks the WOMAN. He brings up the Beast (personal) ANTICHRIST, to attack the family of the Woman.	The career of the BEAST and his attaining to world supremacy	FIRST F in heaven. The hour God's judg announced
ransfer the Kingdom to the amb and the overcomers. MILLENNIUM.					Tr. 7, Woe 3. The divine program reviewed, leading to ↓	The wicked destroyed.	The GREAT TRIBULATION.	The HAI of saints gathered cloud. I I Cr 15.
						The Kingdom of God set up. The MILLENNIUM.		The VII The Bea destroye

OF THE REVELATION.