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# The Century Bible

GENERAL EDITOR: PROF. W. F. ADENEY

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## Revelation

INTRODUCTION

AUTHORIZED VERSION

REVISED VERSION WITH NOTES

INDEX AND MAP

EDITED BY

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AUTHOR OF 'EVANGELICAL RELIGION, BIBLE TRUTH,' 'ULFILAS,  
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THE REVELATION  
OF  
ST. JOHN THE DIVINE  
INTRODUCTION

# THE REVELATION

OF

## ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. THE PROBLEM OF THE APOCALYPSE.

THE problem of the Apocalypse, which has come down to us from the earliest times and still waits for a solution, may be said to be threefold. It is connected with the interpretation, the authorship, and the canonicity of the book. And these three parts or aspects of the problem are mutually interdependent in such a manner, and to such a degree, that the investigation of all three must proceed concurrently. There is no sufficient external evidence, no adequate method of internal criticism, by which any one of these questions can be definitely solved, apart from a solution, at least provisional, of the others. What is to be looked for, therefore, is a slow approximation to a result which will satisfy all the terms of the triple equation, rather than an immediate conclusion which will solve one member of it.

The problem is for every believing student of the Bible not merely a scholastic, but an intensely practical, one, inasmuch as he finds this perplexing book established within the New Testament, to the whole of which we look for instruction and reproof, for inspiration and revelation of the things of God. Nay, the position

which it occupies there at the conclusion, and apparently forming the climax of the inspired volume, seems to assign to it a value of a special kind. And there is nothing in our first discovery of its contents to alter this impression. A book which offers in some way or other to open up those secrets of God which yet lie hidden in the future, seems wholly in place in our sacred Scripture. It is towards some such book that our thoughts have been moving as we travelled through the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles; for all alike point forward to a consummation of all things, to a time when the kingdom of God shall be finally and completely established, when all creation shall cease to groan and travail, when the inheritance of which we have received the firstfruits shall be wholly ours. It is, moreover, towards some such book that our hearts seem to yearn as we travel through the earlier volumes of experience, discovering the contradictions between what should be and what is, accumulating impressions of the Protean forms and tremendous power of wickedness, and craving for the manifestation of triumphant righteousness. Thus both the Christian Bible and the Christian consciousness seem to demand a book of Revelation for their completion or satisfaction. And, unless the Christian church be wholly mistaken, God has provided precisely such a book in what we call the 'Revelation of St. John.'

But when we take the book in hand and read it through with care, we are conscious of a double judgement on it: on the one hand, it does answer in some degree and in certain parts to our expectation; it opens great vistas into the future; it depicts the King in His majesty, and the land that is far off; it peoples that land with those whom we look to find there—with the redeemed of the Lord, with those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb; it sets their Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, upon an unapproachable throne of glory, and places in his hand—the hand that was pierced for

us—the key of all the future. And it represents that future as containing the complete and final triumph of God's people over all their enemies, of righteousness over sin. All this, and much else which is in closest harmony with Christian thought and expectation, is so plain that 'he who runs may read.'

But, on the other hand, there are in the same book elements which give rise to perplexity in varying degrees, amounting in some cases to despair of comprehending them or harmonizing them with the rest of the book. There are figures which are wholly unfamiliar to those trained only in Christian thought, images, personifications, hidden allusions, and enigmas, even a kind of cryptogram, which seems intended to veil rather than to display the truth. These things appear to impose upon the reader the alternative of either forcing upon them an interpretation of his own, or laying them aside as incomprehensible. And the difficulty is only accentuated when we try to get a connected and coherent view of the whole contents of the visions, and to relate them, as a whole, to some conceivable situation in the past, present, or future. In the first three, or possibly five, chapters this difficulty does not arise; but when the Seals are followed by the Trumpets, and these by the Bowls, yet not directly but with apparently disconnected episodes interjected, destroying the proportion and breaking the continuity; when in the twelfth chapter we seem to pass into a new world of allegorical monsters, the First Beast, and the Second, and the Third, when the many heads and the many horns of the Beast begin to play, as it would seem, an important part in human history, the ordinary reader is apt to give up in despair the attempt to follow the book any further, and to leave it out of his canon, or at best to confine himself to those well-remembered portions of it which are more on the plane of his own imagination, and are cast in forms with which he is familiar. And yet the reader who is guided by the Spirit of Christ cannot erase from his

mind the conviction that this also is part of the Word of God.

## 2. THE APOCALYPSE IN THE CHURCH.

It is worth observing that these successive changes in the individual Christian's attitude to this book correspond very closely with those which have marked the attitude of the church as a whole. Throughout the first two centuries of the book's existence it was regarded by the church in the same childlike, unreflective way as by ourselves when first we approach it. Men were fascinated by its poetry, impressed by its stupendous imagery, above all comforted by its reiterated assurances that, in spite of all the tyrannous domination of wickedness, nevertheless 'the Lord reigneth.' About the middle of the third century, however, the reflective period of the church began; the critical spirit awoke, and Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, gave voice to the very difficulties and doubts which occur to any thoughtful reader of to-day. He 'suspects that some deeper sense underlies the words, judging and measuring them not by his own reason, but rather by faith'; he concludes that 'the contents are higher than can be grasped by him.' He cannot understand how the same man could have written the Gospel and Epistles of John and also this Apocalypse. His reasons are the same as occur to us to-day. The Evangelist is so chary of referring to himself, especially by name; the Apocalyptist, on the other hand, is so insistent on his own name, his personality, his share in the visions. Dionysius thus draws out the further distinctions between the Gospel and the Apocalypse (too absolutely, as we shall see): 'The man who gives his mind to the Gospel and the Epistle will find in each of them much about life, much about light, about turning away from darkness and cleaving to truth, about grace and joy, about the flesh and blood of the Lord, about judgement and remission of sins, about the love of God to us and the commandment that we should love one another;

the conviction of the world, of the devil, and of Antichrist, the promise of the Holy Spirit, the adoption of sons; the Father and the Son are everywhere. Utterly diverse and strange is the Apocalypse in comparison with all this, hardly touching or even approximating to any of these things, having no common relation to them.' Moreover, there is the extraordinary contrast between the language, the grammar, and diction of the Apocalypse, and that of the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles of John. In the latter, the style is smooth, the grammar correct, the diction free from 'barbarisms' or solecisms; in the latter, on the other hand, there is a marked indifference to the ordinary grammatical rules, and frequently recurring cases of what Dionysius called 'solecism' and foreign idiom.

Since his time there have never been wanting men of more or less authority in the church who enforced the same arguments, and built on them the denial that the Apocalypse is the work of John the Evangelist and Apostle, with the consequential denial of its canonical rank and authority. The opposition was in many cases sharpened or suggested by doctrinal considerations. The 'Chiliasm' controversy as to the character of the Millennium, and its relation to the Second Coming of Christ, was the cause of keen and prolonged debate in the early church: the advocates of one view naturally found invaluable support in the Apocalypse of John and the interpretation they put upon its millenarian teaching; they were therefore disposed to exalt its authority and maintain its apostolic authorship. Their opponents, on the other hand, against whom the book provided an armoury of arguments which they found it very difficult to meet, were similarly disposed to minimize its authority and to lend a willing ear to any suggestion which threw doubt on its apostolic authorship and canonicity. Views unfavourable to the book, which were based on considerations such as these, prevailed over a large section of the

church for some centuries. Not to mention individual writers, who will be referred to below (p. 39), the Council of Laodicea (about A. D. 360?) omitted the Apocalypse from its Canon of the New Testament; and there is no trace of the book in the Syriac version of the New Testament known as the 'Peshitta.' In fact, it is wanting in all the Syriac MSS. of the New Testament except one. 'It is plain that the Apocalypse never became familiarly known to the Jacobite or any other of the Syrian churches. It was rarely transcribed, rarely commented on, had little influence on their religious mind, and contributed little to their religious thought'<sup>1</sup>.

On the other hand, the Western Church was practically unanimous in its acceptance of the book as apostolic and canonical. It resisted steadfastly the inroads of this criticism, and resisted so successfully that, in the end, it induced the Easterns to revise their judgement, and restore the Apocalypse at least to respect and use in the church. Jerome in his Letter to Dardanus points out that, while the Western Church accepted the Apocalypse and rejected the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Eastern Church rejected the Apocalypse and accepted the Epistle. But, by a kind of interchange, each received in course of time from the other the book which at first it had been inclined to exclude. That is to say, the church as a whole, like the individual Christian, in the end made good its conviction that the Book of Revelation is part of the inspired Word of God—in spite of all difficulties and dubieties as to its interpretation, and even in the face of critical considerations which were as plainly present to the scholars of the third and fourth centuries as they are to us.

With the revival of learning and of Biblical criticism at the Reformation the same process began anew. Luther included the Apocalypse in his translation of the New

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Gwynn, *The Apocalypse of St. John in Syriac*, p. civ.

Testament indeed, but he relegated it, along with the Epistles of James and Jude and that to the Hebrews, to an Appendix. He seems, however, to have afterwards modified, in a sense favourable to the book, his earlier opinion that it did not proceed from the Holy Spirit. Zwingli attributed its authorship to another John, not the Apostle-Evangelist. Calvin, on the other hand, used it as apostolical and canonical; so did Melancthon. Beza defended it against Erasmus. Thus scholars and Reformers of the first rank were ranged against each other in their judgement concerning the Revelation. But the church still clung to it, and upheld it as inspired, because (so at least its whole history suggests) the 'testimonium Spiritus Sancti' was really in its favour.

This conviction was not due, at any rate, to the fact that the church had arrived at any general understanding as to the interpretation of the Apocalypse. In this respect every new generation rather served to increase the perplexity, by propounding some new interpretation of its own; and from the time of the Reformation onwards a whole class of interpretations was added to the two which had previously divided the field. The three classes of interpretation are commonly described as the Futurist, the Historical, and the Preterist. The 'futurist' interpreters see the whole contents of the book as lying still in the future; they recognize in no part of the book (at least after the third chapter) the reflexion of a situation which was either past or present to the writer; from that point forward it is all prophecy, prediction of the events immediately preceding the Second Advent. This was the natural, one might say the necessary, view for the early church to take, for which all was yet in the future; but it has been maintained by this school of expositors right down to our own times, and especially in Great Britain, that the nearest horizon of the prophecy is still in the future for us as it was for the writer and his contemporaries.

The 'historical' interpretation proceeds on the principle that the prophecy covers the whole history of the church and of the world in its antagonism to the church, from the time of its writing down to the end of the world. This school could not well have its rise until there was some considerable space of history to provide material, on to which the apostolic visions and symbols might be fitted. The period of the Reformation was naturally very rich in such material. The discovery, which then became common property, that the church was utterly corrupt, naturally led to the identification of the Pope and the unreformed Catholic Church with Antichrist; and the Catholics were not slow to make the corresponding discovery that one or other of the Beasts in the Apocalypse stood for Protestantism, and that the mystic number 666 spelt the name of Luther. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic period again gave a great impulse to this method of interpretation. So great a cataclysm might well be expected to find a place in any inspired presentation of the future history either of the world or of the church, and might well be taken for an indubitable sign of the approaching end of all things. And the demonic figure of Napoleon, with the dramatic alternation of his fortunes, and more particularly his return to power for the 'Hundred Days,' seemed to fit in marvellously with some of the predictions of the Apocalypse. Accordingly, the 'historical' method flourished with especial vigour in the early part of last century, when there were a whole series of attempts at interpretation, working back from the Napoleonic period, and forward to a date (never far away from the year of writing) on which the end was to come. But as one after another of the dates so positively foretold was passed in safety, and as the theorists thereupon discovered slight mistakes in their calculations, by which they postponed the crisis for a year or two, their systems were discredited, and the

whole 'historical' method of interpretation fell into disrepute.

The third school of interpretation has been called the 'preterist,' which proceeds on the principle that the whole, or by far the greater portion, of the predictions have already been fulfilled; in other words, that the scope of the book is confined to the struggle of the early church first with the Jewish synagogue, and then with the Roman state, and that the predicted issues were realized when the triumph of Christianity was secured, say, at the conversion of Constantine.

Each of these divergent methods has its representatives to-day; the 'futurist' having perhaps less support than either of the others, the continuous 'historical' still commending itself to the majority of English expositors, and the 'preterist' finding favour chiefly among the scholars of Germany.

But now, as if the problem were not already sufficiently complicated, an altogether new element was introduced into it, some twenty years ago<sup>1</sup>, by the appearance of a succession of theories as to the literary origin of the Apocalypse, some of which would put the greater part of its contents, so far as their origin is concerned, outside the field of Christian literature altogether. The typical theory of this class is that propounded by Eberhard Vischer, who sought to prove that the bulk and foundation of the Revelation of John is a Jewish apocalypse, which has been adapted to Christian ideas and for Christian purposes by a Christian editor—it may be John or it may be another. Whatever in the book is specifically Christian has, according to this theory, been worked in by the Christian editor; the first three chapters, the worship of the Redeemed at the close of chap. v, and

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<sup>1</sup> Sporadic suggestions that the Apocalypse was compiled from three or four Documents, originally independent, were made early in the nineteenth century; but they met at that time with no general acceptance among scholars.

again of chap. vii, and of course all the references to the Lamb, are traced to this source. This novel idea set the fashion for a number of years, and one student after another has brought forward his scheme for dividing up the Apocalypse into its constituent sources, some of them Jewish, some of them Christian, in their origin, or for detecting the hands of successive editors in this section or in that. It is perhaps fortunate that so many have followed the example set by Vischer; for with the same material and apparatus, and equipped with equal scholarship, they have conspicuously failed to arrive at any agreement amongst themselves, either as to what sources are present, or where they respectively begin and leave off, or how and by whom they were brought together to form the whole which lies before us. The situation here is, therefore, quite different from that arrived at, say, in regard to the Pentateuch, where, amidst wide difference as to minute details, there is practical agreement as to the main lines of division, and the main characteristics, of the sources out of which the Pentateuch has been produced. In the criticism of the Apocalypse, if anywhere, it is legitimate to leave the critics who wish to dismember the book to come to some understanding and agreement among themselves. In fact, their failure up till now may be taken as a fair indication that, in regard to this book, the method they adopt is a mistaken one. And for the moment at least attention is now directed away from all such theories. As Holtzmann says: 'Its inner unity is the foundation of all more recent work on the Apocalypse.'

Nevertheless, the diverting of attention to these theories of the literary origin of Revelation has had this effect, that little progress has been made of late with the question of its interpretation. But the labour has not been lost, for, by closing certain avenues to solution, it has forced investigation into a new direction, namely the tracing of the history and origin of apocalyptic

ideas, figures, and images. The one hopeful approach to a solution of the problem of the Apocalypse lies in the study of other literature of the same class and character.

### 3. APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE.

This key to the origin and interpretation of the Revelation of John has only been put into our hands in recent years, through the discovery and critical examination of a considerable mass of literature to which the general title of 'Apocalyptic' may be given.

Our Book of Revelation opens with a distinct claim to belong to such a class. Its title, 'Apocalypse of John,' may not be contemporary with itself, but the opening words, 'Apocalypse of Jesus Christ, which God gave him, to shew unto his servants, *even* the things which must shortly come to pass,' not only belong to the book, but accurately describe its contents. What we have to deal with is, and purports to be, an Apocalypse. The word has, of course, a meaning of its own, the same as that of its Latin equivalent 'Revelation.' 'Apocalypse' is the removing of a covering or veil which has been hiding truth or reality from the eyes of men. In that sense it is used in several passages of the New Testament, e.g. 'the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the apocalypse of the sons of God.' But before the end of the first century the word had acquired a quite technical sense, as the designation of a peculiar kind of literary activity which had been much practised among the Jews of the last two centuries before Christ. The books of this class are almost entirely unknown to the ordinary Bible-student, seeing that we have only one included in our New Testament and one, not generally recognized as apocalyptic, in the Old Testament. Neither does our acquaintance with the literature of other peoples assist us here, seeing that this form seems to have been developed among the Jews alone. It is all the more necessary, therefore, that we

should make ourselves, in some measure at least, acquainted with what survives of this apocalyptic literature.

The example which has been longest known, and in some respects is the most interesting, is that which goes by the name of the *Book of Enoch*<sup>1</sup>. The full extent of this book's influence upon the thinking and the language of the early church has not yet been widely recognized. It enjoyed great respect among both Jews and Christians down to the end of the first century, and even later among the Christians. It is quoted by name in the Epistle of Jude (verses 14, 15), and also in the *Epistle of Barnabas*. Further quotations and allusions which may be traced to the same source are found in the Epistle of Jude and also in 1 Peter. Irenæus quotes it: 'Enoch also pleasing God without circumcision, man though he was discharged the office of legate to the angels'—referring to the section of this book in which Enoch acts as messenger between the Most High and the 'angels in prison.' Tertullian looked on it as itself inspired: 'These things,' he says, 'the Holy Ghost, foreseeing from the beginning the entrance of superstition, foretold by the mouth of Enoch.'

The Jews were the first to abandon the book, which they found inconveniently full of passages capable of a Christian interpretation. They were followed after an interval by the Christian church, whose perplexities on the subject may be illustrated from Augustine: 'I must confess that some things of Divine character were written by Enoch, the seventh from Adam, since this is testified by the Apostle Jude in his canonical Epistle; but they are deservedly excluded from the Jewish Scriptures, because they lack authority and cannot be proved to be genuine' (*de Civitate*, xv. 23). By the sixth century the *Book of Enoch* had fallen wholly out of use, and indeed it disappeared from the knowledge even of scholars for more than

<sup>1</sup> See the article in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, 'Enoch (Ethiopic) Book of'; R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch*; J. Rendel Harris in *Expositor*, 1901 (Sept. and Nov.).

a thousand years, until, in 1773, three copies of it were brought home from Egypt by Bruce, the famous traveller. It is written in the name of the patriarch Enoch, and the greater portion of its contents consists of visions which purport to have been seen by him; but the date of its composition is certainly not earlier than the second and first centuries before Christ. It contains a long and elaborate account of the fall of the angels based upon the sixth chapter of Genesis, of their punishment announced to them by Enoch, of their petition for pardon presented by Enoch to the Most High, but refused; a long narrative of Enoch's journey under the guidance of an angel to various parts of the earth, and also to the underworld to see where the angels were detained in bonds. It describes the abode of righteous souls also, the myriads upon myriads who stand before the glory of the Holy One, the tree of Life and the tree of Knowledge. It is from Enoch that we get the names of the four archangels—Michael, Raphael, Phanuel, and Gabriel; and he also foresees the Day of Judgement when the Judge shall be the Chosen One, the 'Son of Man.' This passage may possibly be of Christian origin; nevertheless, it is worth quoting to shew the correspondence of ideas with our Apocalypse: 'On that day shall my Chosen One sit on the throne of his glory.' 'On that day I will cause my Chosen One to dwell in their midst, and I will change the heaven, and make it for everlasting blessing and light.' 'I saw Him who has a head of many days, and His head was white as wool; beside Him was another, whose countenance was as the appearance of a man; yea, his countenance was full of grace, like as that of one of the holy angels. I asked the angel who went with me, and shewed me all secrets, concerning that Son of Man, who he was, whence he came, and wherefore he went with the Head of many days. He answered and said unto me, "This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness, with whom righteousness dwelleth, and who revealeth all the treasures of that which is

hidden." Another section contains the visions in which Enoch sees the destruction which is to come on the world through the Flood, and then a foreshadowing of the history of Israel under the form of conflicts between different kinds of animals. He gives an explanation of the 'Weeks of the World,' of which there are to be ten. In the first lives Enoch himself, in the second Noah, in the third Abraham, and so on, until in the ninth the great Judgement is opened, and in the tenth reaches its climax and ushers in the end of all things.

It is quite plain that this apocalypse either exerted a considerable influence on the generations immediately before and contemporary with Jesus, or at least reflects a large number of ideas which were in the minds of men of these generations, and are not accounted for by the Old Testament. Such, for example, is the developed doctrine of Angels which meets us at the very outset of the New Testament, the developed doctrine of the Resurrection, and of the Day of Judgement. It is very significant, too, that no fewer than four titles of the Messiah are used for the first time of a personal Messiah in this *Book of Enoch*: Christ or the Anointed One; the Righteous One; the Elect or Chosen One; and the Son of Man. And in our Lord's own words, 'when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory,' there is an echo, it may be a deliberate quotation, of the words of this book cited above.

Another work of the same class is also alluded to in the Epistle of Jude. In verse 9 we read: 'Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgement, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.' This story, for which of course there is no authority in

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<sup>1</sup> It is thought by Mr. Charles that 'phrases, clauses, or thoughts derived from Enoch are found' not only in Jude and Revelation, but also in Rom. viii. 38, ix. 5; Eph. i. 21; Heb. xi. 5; Acts iii. 14; John v. 22, 27; Luke ix. 35, xvi. 9; xxiii. 35; Matt. xix. 28; xxv. 41, xxvi. 24.

the Old Testament, was said by Origen to be found in a book called the *Assumption of Moses*, to which also references are made by several other early Christian writers. This work, which was found in 1861, is now ascertained to be of the character of an apocalypse, embodying a prediction of the history of Israel, supposed to be addressed by Moses to Joshua. This prophecy leads up to the war with Rome in B. C. 4, after which is to come the end, and the establishment of God's kingdom through all creation. The devil is to come to an end, and with him sorrow is to cease. The earth will tremble, the sun will not give its light, the horns of the moon will be broken. For God the Most High will appear to judge His people. 'And thou, Joshua,' says Moses, 'keep these words and this book, but I shall go hence into the rest of my fathers.' Soon after this the only MS. of the *Assumption of Moses* which has yet been found breaks off, and it is still only an inference from the statement of the early Fathers that the close of the book related the contest between Michael and the Evil One over the body of Moses<sup>1</sup>.

A third document, belonging to this class, is the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, in which Baruch, the contemporary and friend of Jeremiah, appears as the recipient of revelations concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. The main part of the book was written shortly after the Fall of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. Baruch inquires when the judgement on the wicked is to begin, and receives answer from God that the period of tribulation will be divided into twelve parts, and every part will have its plague. By another division the same period falls into two parts, 'weeks of seven weeks,' whatever that may signify. A further question of Baruch, whether the tribulation is to affect the whole earth, or only a portion of it, is met with the answer that it will affect the whole.

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<sup>1</sup> See further Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, iii. 448.

Thereafter the Messiah will be revealed and a period of joy and glory will commence. Baruch thereupon summons the elders of the people to meet in the valley of the Kidron, and announces to them that 'after a little while the buildings of Sion shall be shaken down, that they may be builded again. But even that erection shall not endure, but once again after a season Sion shall be overthrown and remain desolate until the appointed time; thereafter it is to be renewed in glory and crowned for ever.' The date of this apocalypse cannot be fixed with certainty; 'but it is most probable that it was written not long after the fall of the city, when the question how God could permit such a disaster was a burning one' (Schürer)<sup>1</sup>.

In some respects the closest parallel to our Apocalypse is provided by the strangely named *Fourth Book of Esra* or *Esdras*, a Jewish apocalypse which had a wide circulation and enjoyed great esteem in the Christian church, and may be found to-day in the English Apocrypha. It is quoted as a genuine work of prophecy by many of the early Fathers, finds a place in several Latin MSS. of the Bible, and appears with 3 Esdras as an Appendix to the Roman Vulgate. In its original form it appears to have consisted of seven visions which purport to have been seen by Esra in Babylon, beginning in the thirtieth year of the Captivity. But the actual period of the book's composition is to be found somewhere in the first century A. D., either in the reign of Titus (Ewald), or under Nerva (Hausrath), or in the time of Domitian (Schürer). The limits thus suggested being practically those which are open for the Apocalypse of John, the two books may be regarded as contemporary productions, the one proceeding from a Jewish, the other from a Christian, pen. A comparison of the two, therefore, cannot fail to throw an instructive light on our Apocalypse. The writer of

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<sup>1</sup> See further Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, i. 249.

4 Esra is concerned with the eternal problem of the origin of evil and suffering, driven home upon him and his contemporaries with peculiar force by the destruction of the Holy City and the triumph of pagan Rome. Why has God given over His own people to the heathen? Israel has sinned, it is true, but have not the heathen, who rejected God, sinned yet more? And Israel's experience is only an example of the common experience of mankind—misery and pain, and the triumph of wrong over right; and if all this be the punishment of that sin, the germ of which had been implanted in all his posterity by Adam, how did Adam, the creature of God's hand, come to entail such an inheritance upon his race? These and the like questions are put in succession by the Seer, and replied to by 'the angel who was sent to me, named Uriel.' The reply is practically that he desires the impossible. Even the world of nature is full of unsolved riddles; how can man expect to discover the secrets of the moral government of the universe? But the end will bring understanding, and the end is at hand. This world of misery and mystery is to be followed by one of peace and unclouded vision. Thus 4 Esra deals with the same problem as the Book of Job, but carries it a step further; and the further step is just the specific mark of apocalyptic, the focussing of hope and patience on a near approaching end, and the assurance that another world lies beyond.

The Apocalypse of John arrives at the same point—the necessity of the unveiling of the future—by an exhibition, not of the speculative problem of evil, but of the practical necessities of the church. The Letters to the Seven Churches display briefly but sufficiently the situation which requires to be illuminated, and can be illuminated only, by light thrown upon it from the future. The problem for the church at the end of the first century is that which prompts the cry of the martyred souls below the altar, 'O Lord, how long?'—the practical problem

of maintaining the faith and testimony of Jesus within small communities which were all but engulfed in the surrounding heathenism, invaded by false teaching, and exposed to the relentless cruelties of a persecuting government. To them, too, the answer of apocalyptic was, 'The end is near.'

In 4 Esra this assurance is conveyed and confirmed by means of a succession of visions, each one of which is followed by an interpretation given by the angel. Of these the most important for our purpose is that of an Eagle which is seen rising out of the sea, having three heads, twelve wings, and eight 'secondary' wings. A voice proceeding out of its body commands the wings to awake at their proper time, but the heads to sleep for the present. The wings accordingly awake, and 'reign,' the earlier ones for longer, the later for shorter, periods, and then disappear. Then the heads are roused; the middle one devours some of the secondary wings, and disappears, whereupon one of the others destroys the third. Then a Lion is seen who rebukes the Eagle and announces judgement as about to overtake it. The Judgement follows; the last head disappears; the two remaining minor wings rule for a short time, and then the whole body of the Eagle is consumed in flames.

Fortunately, this bizarre and seemingly meaningless imagery is provided with an interpretation from the lips of the angel who displays the visions, an interpretation which is valuable for the light it throws upon the whole system of apocalyptic symbols. 'The Eagle, whom thou sawest rising up out of the sea, is the fourth kingdom which appeared to thy brother Daniel in his vision; it is true it was not so interpreted to him as I am now to interpret it to thee.' The twelve wings signify 'twelve kings,' who are to reign one after the other. The eight secondary wings are also 'eight kings,' but kings whose years are to be short and few. The three heads represent three kings who are to rule with more energy and do

more mischief than all the rest. 'They are called the heads of the eagle because it is they that will bring its wickedness to a climax.' The 'disappearance' of one head signifies that that king is to die in his bed. The other two are to die by the sword. 'The Lion, however, which burst forth out of the wood before thine eyes, with a mighty roar, who spoke to the eagle, and rebuked it for all its sins, that is the Messiah (literally, 'the Anointed One'), whom the Most High hath kept unto the end of the days, who shall arise and stand forth from the seed of David.'

Assisted by this interpretation, modern scholars have recognized in the eagle the Roman Empire, in the twelve wings, twelve emperors beginning with Cæsar, in the secondary wings, either pretenders to the throne or, more probably, local governors of Syria and Egypt, and in the three 'heads,' Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian (Schürer, Gunkel). But the precise identification of these figures does not concern us so much as the observation that, in this apocalypse contemporary with our own, this eagle-monster with its heads and wings is authoritatively interpreted to signify the Roman Empire and its rulers, and that the course of history is plainly intended to be described in the actions and fate of the various portions of the monster's body. It is further to be noticed that the heads, wings, and minor wings all signify rulers—that heads and wings alike stand for emperors; we shall find in the Apocalypse of John that, in like manner, the 'heads' and 'horns' of the monster do not need to be differentiated, but stand all alike for rulers also. The Lion, signifying the Messiah, finds of course a parallel in the 'Lion that is of the tribe of Judah' (Rev. v. 5); and here also he appears for Judgement. Of great interest also is the remark of the angel that the interpretation he is about to give is not the same as that understood by Daniel, for it shews that this Seer was conscious of receiving new interpretations of earlier visions; in other

words, that it was part of his function as a writer of apocalypse to recognize and proclaim their fulfilment in the historical circumstances of his own time.

The fourth vision also throws light on the method of apocalyptic. It is that of a woman who weeps and mourns because of the death of her son on the very day of his marriage. Even while the Seer is speaking with her, 'suddenly her countenance shone, and her appearance became as the brightness of lightning; as he continued to gaze, behold, the woman was no longer to be seen, but in her place a builded city.' The interpretation is then given by the angel, to the effect that the woman is Sion (cf. Rev. xii. 1 ff.), and the death of her son represents the destruction of the city; wherein it is interesting to observe that two different figures, mother and son, stand really for the same thing, but for the same thing in different aspects—the mother for the ideal city, the son for the city in its material form. In the Apocalypse of John also it will be found that similarly contrasted figures present different aspects of the same thing—e. g. seven lamps, seven eyes, seven horns, all standing for the 'seven Spirits of God.'

The sixth vision in the same book is that of a man who comes forth out of the heart of the sea, and 'flies with the clouds of heaven.' An 'innumerable host' of men are gathered together to wage war upon him, but he destroys them all, sending forth 'from his mouth something like a fiery stream, from his lips a burning breath, and from his tongue a torrent of sparks' (cf. Rev. ix. 18, xi. 5, xix. 15). The man then calls to himself another 'peaceful' army, who approach, some with sorrow, others with joy. According to the interpretation of this vision the 'Man' is he through whom God will 'redeem creation,' the Messiah, 'my Son,' who comes to destroy the hosts of the wicked, but to gather to himself the 'ten tribes' who had been deported by the king of Assyria.

The whole of this book, but especially the fourth, fifth

and sixth visions will repay closer study by every one interested in the Apocalypse. For it also reveals the working of the Jewish mind under apocalyptic forms at a period contemporary with John. The writer is plainly a thoughtful, earnest, truly pious man. He attributes his privilege as the receiver of visions to his habit of deep pondering—to use his own word, ‘burrowing in’—the things of God. His heart is genuinely affected by the problem of the fate of the heathen who know not God. He seems to have gathered materials for the imagery of his visions from many different quarters, and yet ‘he stands over against these materials as master, not as slave.’ His method of dealing with them is well described by Gunkel: ‘Both visions (fifth and sixth) contain allegories. We distinguish among the allegories (1) “allegorical material,” that is, material into which an allegory has been read; and (2) “allegories” in the proper sense—which have been originally composed as such by the writer. The two styles can be recognized by this mark, that the “allegorized material” is easily to be understood apart from any interpretation, while at the same time the interpretation itself frequently appears to be somewhat far-fetched (a good example is in John’s Apocalypse chap. xii), whereas the original allegories, when they are not devised with special skill, commonly suffer from the fact that they yield no intelligible meaning apart from the interpretation to which they point.’

And yet this Apocalypse is not merely a mosaic of earlier fragments put together with literary art and skill. The recognition that the author has incorporated such material, and has made use of traditional symbols, imagery or conceptions, by no means invalidates his claim to speak in the spirit of prophecy, on the ground of visions which he had actually received. Gunkel, who in an earlier work had been inclined to deny this, in his Introduction to 4 Esra accepts and enforces it in a striking way. Commenting on the statement that ‘actual spiritual

experiences were found only in the era of the prophets, and again in that of the New Testament,' he says: 'This is correct only in so far as official Judaism, that which was governed by the Canon, certainly admitted as valid revelations of God those alone which are found in the Canon of the Old Testament, and adjudged its own period to be wholly deserted by the Spirit of God. It is, however, another question whether such vision-situations as are described in 4 Esra actually existed or not. Such phenomena are in reality not the property of one epoch, but present themselves in all times and in all places, and are indeed still to be found among ourselves; the spiritual content which unites itself to them varies, as does the estimate that is passed upon them; the phenomenon itself always remains the same. The belief, therefore, that mysterious phenomena of this kind were simply impossible in Judaism after the close of the Canon is only a prejudice. Rather does the sudden reappearance of a like phenomenon in the New Testament period, coupled with the fact that contemporaries evince an immediate comprehension of "the Spirit," acquaint us that these spiritual phenomena have never quite died out in Judaism. They were only driven into a corner by the weight of the Canon. The general opinion that revelation took place only in ancient times compelled the Seer to write under the mask of some old, recognized prophet. . . . But these things are presented in 4 Esra with such truth to nature, and hang so closely together with the inward situation of the author, such as was undoubtedly realized by him, that we may have every confidence that we have here to do with facts<sup>1</sup>.'

*Mutatis mutandis*, these remarks apply to the whole class of apocalyptic literature. Concerning the other members of the class, however, it must suffice to record the names of the more important, and refer the reader

<sup>1</sup> Gunkel in *Kautzsch's Pseudepigrapha*, p. 342. See also Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, i. 763.

to the works in which the whole subject is exhaustively treated<sup>1</sup>.

All these represent apocalypses of Jewish origin, though some of them, as we have them, contain also Christian elements or betray Christian influence. But the interest in this literary method and the practice of it were not confined to Judaism. Rather were they part of the heritage taken over by the Christian church. The well-known *Shepherd of Hermas* both speaks in the spirit and is moulded in the form of an apocalypse. And there existed also in early times Apocalypses of 'Peter, Paul, Thomas, and Stephen.' Nor need we look outside the New Testament to find traces of the same method and point of view. The great eschatological discourse in Matt. xxiv. 1-51 (cf. Mark xiii. 1-7; Luke xxi. 5-36) moves on the plane of apocalyptic, and employs many of the figures and symbols to which this literature had already given currency.

#### 4. CHARACTERISTICS OF APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE.

The class of literature to which these works belong, either in whole or in part, has certain well-marked characteristics both of an external and of an internal kind. It displays a certain common religious background, and a certain common relation to the circumstances of the time out of which it springs. Apocalyptic is the successor of prophecy, the form of religious admonition and instruction to which men had recourse who were conscious that for them there was no longer any 'open vision.' It is, therefore, at once the continuation of

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<sup>1</sup> *The Ascension of Isaiah; The Book of Jubilees, or Little Genesis; The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs; The Sibylline Oracles.* See on the whole subject Harnack, 'Apocalyptic Literature' in *Encyclopædia Britannica*; Drummond, *The Jewish Messiah*; Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*; and the relative articles in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.

prophecy, and sharply distinguished from it. The prophet speaks directly to the people<sup>1</sup>; the apocalypticist writes in solitude what men may read in public (Rev. i. 3). The prophet speaks what God the Lord has spoken; what he speaks is afterwards committed to writing. The apocalypticist writes, describing what God the Lord has given him to see. The prophet is a speaker, an orator, a preacher. The apocalypticist is a seer, a ponderer of what he has seen, a student of what those before him have written.

The distinction between prophecy and apocalyptic will be further seen by observing the different religious backgrounds from which they severally spring. Prophecy looks for the manifestation of Jehovah's righteousness and power in the near future, but on the stage of Jewish history, and through the action of forces already operative in human affairs. Apocalyptic, on the other hand, predicts a like manifestation indeed, but thrusts it back behind a great crisis, transposes it into the key of universal history, and anticipates the intrusion of new forces, demonic and Divine. The drama of prophecy is transacted on the plane of this world; the drama of apocalyptic upon the double plane of 'this world' and 'the world to come'; its central principle is expressed in the Jewish saying, 'Deus non unum sed duo secula fecit.' Isaiah, for example, looks forward to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom upon earth, when 'the cow and the bear shall feed, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and none shall hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.' The apocalypticists, on the other hand, look through and beyond any such 'tentative' realization of the Divine kingdom here to 'a new heaven and a new earth.' The centre of the prophet's hopes is a restored and glorified Sion upon earth; the apocalypticist fixes

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<sup>1</sup> See G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, ii. 49 f., 276 ff.

his gaze upon a 'new Jerusalem coming down from heaven.'

This distinction in character between prophecy and apocalypse is due, in part, to certain profound modifications in the conception of man, of God and of the scope of the Divine activity, and in part to the circumstances of the times when apocalyptic literature flourished. The apocalypses have been called 'Tracts for the Times,' and, in fact, 'Tracts for Bad Times.' They are specially addressed to a generation which discovered a cruel contradiction between its faith and its experience, between things as they ought to be in God's world and for God's people, if their trust in God be not vain, and things as they are. It is said sometimes that apocalypses are the product of a period of despair. But this requires qualifying. The despair from which they spring is despair of the present, and despair of the immediate future; but it is not despair of the end. Rather is it an attempt to bring the certainty of ultimate victory and deliverance home to troubled minds with such intensity that it appears to be immediately at hand. They were, indeed, to a certain extent a protest against the temper of moral and intellectual scepticism which is the real danger of such periods. This temper shewed itself at least in certain sections of the Jewish people during the centuries immediately preceding the birth of Christ; it seems to find utterance in the Book of Ecclesiastes, with its judgement upon human life as *vanitas vanitatum*, and its want of outlook upon a higher form of life, its *fin de siècle* weariness which lies near unto despair. The despair of the true Israel, however, was like the despair of every truly religious man, which flings him back upon God. As the climax of individual confidence is expressed in 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him,' so Israel's and the church's faith may find its highest utterance in a form of literature which realizes with poignant intensity the agony of the present and

the yet greater agony, it may be, of the immediate future, only to grasp with firmer hand the Divine Presence through it all, and the Divine event towards which all moves. And this form of literature is apocalyptic.

The development of such a form was also favoured by, as in turn it helped to carry further, certain changes of thought which mark the same period. These may be observed as affecting the conceptions of the world as God takes to do with it, of man and of God.

The 'world' of the prophets consisted practically of God's people, Judah and Israel, and 'the nations around,' Edom, Moab, and Syria, with Egypt and Assyria at the opposite extremes. With the smaller of these the kingdom of Israel or Judah might dare to measure strength. Even the two large powers were so countered by one another that Israel could always look to the one for deliverance from, or protection against, the other. There was nothing in the 'world,' as so understood, to preclude the rise of a Messianic state.

The situation changed with the rise of the Greek kingdom. From that time forth the Jews were in contact with an empire that was in a new sense 'world-wide.' Alexander laid a net of Greek dominion over the whole East from Greece to Persia. Then came Rome with an organization of government such as the East had not known before, Rome to whom even Egypt was but a province, her granary. It followed, almost of necessity, that the hope of political independence, which had been part of the original Messianic conception, died in the hearts of the people—to know only occasional and spasmodic revivals. But it had a resurrection in the apocryphal and apocalyptic literature. In its new form it burst the swaddling bonds of Jewish politics; for many who spoke through these books, or nourished their faith upon them, the expected kingdom of Messiah became as wide as the kingdom of the oppressors; not the kingdom of Israel alone, but 'the kingdom of the

world' was to become 'the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.'

Thus was completed in the apocalypses the process, the beginnings of which we see in the later prophets—the emancipation of the world's hope from the limitations of a merely material destiny.

There went along with this change in the view of the 'world' a change in the conception of human life, one of the most momentous in the history of human thought. The roots of the belief in immortality may be found in the Old Testament, but its development into an essential part of the religious consciousness is the fruit of the apocalyptic period. The hope of immortality does not appear to have formed part of the original Hebrew conception of human life, and the absence of it made their life even more perplexing to many of God's people than it is to us. For if God did not vindicate His people and their trust in Him here, there seemed to be no opportunity for Him to do it at all.

'Shall the dead praise thee

Or they that go down into the pit?'

We may see the dawning of this great hope in the later prophets and in Job, a blessing which came to men who in the darkness clung to God saying, 'Except Thou bless us we will not let Thee go.' But it was during the obscure and almost dumb period to which most of these apocalypses belong that this hope became a conviction, and the conviction of many. We cannot say that, even in the time of our Lord, it was the conviction of the whole people; the priestly, aristocratic, and conservative party known as the Sadducees seem to have resisted it as a heresy; they said 'there was no resurrection'; and thus in our Lord's time the Jews were still divided on the question. Jesus by his teaching, and pre-eminently by his resurrection, both ratified and illustrated this doctrine of immortality, with the profound revolution in the conception of man and of human life which it carried with it. He 'brought

life and immortality to light,' kindled a beacon beyond the valley, nay, rather lit up as by the radiance of the risen sun the 'land of far distances,' where hitherto had been only dim twilight and a shadowy existence, guessed, not known.

A third change of equal, or even greater, importance was wrought out during the same period, and again largely through the influence of this literature: a change in the conception of God and His relation to created things. Speculation on the Being and Nature of God was absent from the minds of the early Hebrews. Enough for them that He was, and that He was the Rewarder of them that seek Him. God was a fact. He was *their* God. He dealt personally with Abraham. He dealt with the people through Moses and Samuel. He moved with His people through the wilderness. He abode with them in the land which was theirs because it was His. It would be an anachronism to say that they thought of God as immanent; but they did not think of Him as transcendent. But the tendency from the time of Isaiah onwards had been towards a conception of God as removed, and ever further removed from contact with the things of earth and from immediate intercourse with men. This becomes very marked in apocalyptic literature, and one of its indications is the development in this period of a doctrine of Angels, an order of created but superhuman beings, who were regarded as mediators of intercourse between God and man. They were felt to be necessary in order to bridge the gulf which seemed to be ever widening, as the sense of sin, both individual and national, became stronger in the Jewish people. The profoundest recognition of God's nature in the Old Testament had held both conceptions in one grasp of faith, as when He was recognized as 'the High and Holy One,' who at the same time 'dwelt with him that is of a contrite heart.' The tendency, at least of apocalyptic, was to develop one side alone of this all-comprehending conception, emphasizing the transcendence

of the Divine Being. The two sides were brought together again, each in its highest and deepest form, when 'the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us'; and one of the marks which most strikingly distinguishes our Apocalypse from other books of this class is the way in which the exalted 'Jesus' is at once in direct communication with the Seer, and clothed in the attributes of the Most High.

These being the chief elements in the religious background of apocalyptic literature, the books of this class have also certain external characteristics in common. Thus they will be found usually to contain two elements, one of earnest exhortation to faithfulness, patience, and endurance, the other of prediction of the approaching end. For the apocalyptist there is no longer any hope of progress by development; he announces, and insists on, a crisis, a catastrophe, as the absolutely necessary introduction to a new era. The confusion, the sufferings, the disasters he describes, all move forward to a climax, but they are for him 'the beginning of birth-pangs'; out of them is to come, for those who believe and endure, new life and a new world. This anticipation of catastrophe is one great motive of apocalyptic. It is religious because it recognizes that this also comes from God. It is of faith and hope because it proclaims that the righteous shall be saved, yet so as by fire.

Another external characteristic which these apocalypses have in common is that they, with one great exception, are pseudonymous—are written in the name, and, as it were, under the mask, of some great figure of the past. Enoch, Moses, Isaiah, Baruch, these and other great names were used in them. Into the motives of this practice it is not necessary here to inquire; they were probably in part motives of precaution against the consequences of open speaking on what were, to some extent, political questions, partly motives of modesty, not unnatural when men felt the prophetic impulse, but knew

it would not find recognition from their countrymen. But our Apocalypse differs in this point from all the others. It differs obviously in so far as the name in which it is written is not that of a man belonging to the remote past, but that of one who was certainly a contemporary of the generation which saw its production. And no writer of importance now suggests that this Apocalypse is pseudonymous; by whomsoever it was written, he was a man who rightly gave his name as John.

Another remarkable feature of this literature is the large amount of common material which is employed by one after another of the apocalypses. The basis of them all may be said to be in certain portions of the Old Testament, the theophanies in Isa. vi and Ezek. i, the prophecies on Babylon in Isa. xiii, xiv, and Jer. i, ii, the predictions concerning Gog and Magog in Ezek. xxxviii, xxxix, the fourth chapter of Joel, the fourth chapter of Malachi, and the Visions of Zechariah. But especially the Book of Daniel has contributed conceptions and symbols which became apocalyptic conventions, part of the framework or the setting in which, as it were, from thenceforth apocalyptic ideas must be set forth. The representation of the kingdoms of this world under the symbol of different monsters, of their kings as heads of the 'Beast,' the 'abomination of desolation,' and the computation of the end by means of cryptic periods, are only some of the features derived from Daniel which reappear in successive apocalypses.

An attempt has recently been made by Gunkel and others to account for other 'common material' in this literature by tracing it to sources outside the Old Testament, and Jewish literature, to sources in the religions of Babylonia or Persia. But the investigation has not gone far enough, and probably the materials are insufficient, for any decisive results to be obtained.

A valuable investigation might be made as to the attitude taken up by each successive apocalypticist to this

traditional material. And one result would probably be the discovery that he regards himself as to a large extent an interpreter of earlier apocalyptic prediction. We must understand that for many generations the minds of men were turned in this direction, sometimes more, sometimes less, persistently according to the fluctuations of national fortune; their imaginations were possessed by these symbols; they would be seeking in the events of their day for signs of the fulfilment of prophecies like those of Daniel. And the writer of an apocalypse was prompted to his work, in part at least, by the conviction that he had found the key to their interpretation. He incorporated them in his own apocalypse, and did so in such a way as to indicate, either by the setting he gave to each familiar symbol, or by some modification of its form, the time or manner in which he anticipated or recognized its fulfilment. We have seen a striking illustration of this attitude in 4 Ezra, where the angel explains that, in interpreting the fourth kingdom in Daniel of Rome, he is not giving the interpretation of Daniel, for whom the fourth kingdom meant the Græco-Syrian state. It seems probable that this feature of apocalyptic presents itself in our Apocalypse. Any reader who brings to its study a tolerable familiarity with the prophets of the Old Testament will recognize how great is the use made of their writings by the writer of the Book of Revelation. He will not only be able to trace both ideas and the form or symbol in which they are expressed to the Scriptures of the Old Covenant, but will find also many direct quotations, and still more indirect allusions. A glance at one of the modern editions of the Greek Testament (the Stuttgart, or Westcott and Hort), in which such passages as are directly based on Old Testament sources are printed in heavier type, will shew how considerable is the amount of this material. And if we find reason to suppose that John derived some of his material, not only from the Old Testament, but also from extra-canonical books, and

especially from apocalypses which were current in his generation, it would be only what the comparative study of this literature would lead us to expect.

### 5. THE AUTHOR.

The Book of Revelation claims to have been written by 'John.' Not once only, but twice at the beginning (i. 4, 9), and once towards the end of the book (xxii. 8), the writer names himself thus. And, as we have seen, the Christian church down to A. D. 240 both admitted the claim and unhesitatingly recognized in this 'John,' the son of Zebedee, the apostle of Jesus Christ. In the allusions to this book down to the time of Dionysius there is, on the one hand, a total absence of doubt (saving the cases of the *Alogi* and Caius) that the Apocalypse is the work of the Apostle John, and, on the other hand, more than one direct assertion that he was the author.

Of internal confirmatory evidence there is none that can be called direct, and not much that is indirect. It is indeed hardly to be expected in a work of this class. But three points deserve to be noted. First, there is nothing in the Book of Revelation, or in the personality of the author as there suggested, that conflicts with the *character* of the Apostle John as it is indicated in the Synoptic Gospels. On the contrary, there is much in the gospel portrait of the son of Zebedee which harmonizes well with the tone and temper of the Apocalypse. He and his brother had been surnamed by Jesus himself 'Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder' (Mark iii. 17). The characteristics which must have been present to suggest and to justify such an appellation, display themselves in the over-zealous indignation which prompted the sons of Zebedee to wish fire to descend from heaven and destroy the inhospitable Samaritans (Luke ix. 54), and in the impetuous action of rebuking the exorcist

whom they 'found casting out devils' in Jesus' name, but without his authority. Highly significant for the connexion between the son of Zebedee and the Apocalypse is the request made by the two brothers (Matt. xx. 20), or by their mother on their behalf (Mark x. 37), 'Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on *thy* left hand, in thy glory' (Matt. 'in thy kingdom'). And, again, the determination with which they accept the condition offered to them by Jesus, even without the granting of the request, marks the same strenuousness of character and of faith which underlies the writing of the Apocalypse. The problem of the relation between the 'son of thunder' and the 'apostle of love' does not demand our attention here; but it may be observed that its difficulty would certainly diminish if the date of the Apocalypse were brought back, as many have seen reason to think it should be, from the end of the century to the year A. D. 70 or thereabouts.

Secondly, it is plain from the book itself, and in particular from the Letters to the Seven Churches, that the author was one who occupied a position of unusual prominence and authority in the churches of Western Asia Minor. To all of the churches to which he writes he must have been known by reputation, and to some, if not to all, by sight and hearing. The combination of authority and personal humility with which he writes is the mark of a man who knows that he needs no credentials. And it may be asked, Of what John, except the Apostle, could that be said in relation to all of these seven scattered churches? If John the Apostle spent the latter part of his life in Asia Minor, as tradition so strongly asserts that he did, and exercised the influence which it ascribes to him, it is not credible that another John, writing to the very centres where his influence was greatest, could present himself, as the writer of the Apocalypse does, giving his name and nothing more, and yet speaking with such a voice of authority. As it has been tersely put

by Holtzmann: 'Either John [the Apostle] wrote it, or John was never at Ephesus.'

It is true that the writer nowhere describes himself as an apostle, and a good deal has been made of the fact. But such an avoidance of the title might have more than one simple explanation. It is certainly a feature in common with the Fourth Gospel, the writer of which is so careful to allude to himself only indirectly; and the comparison is not vitiated by the fact that, in the Apocalypse, John does name himself. The altogether different character of the work required at least the naming of the author, on whose personal authority its whole value depends. The writer of the one is a chronicler; of the other, a prophet.

Thirdly, it is no serious objection to apostolic authorship that the writer in that case assigns to his own name a place, along with those of the other apostles, in the foundations of the heavenly city (xxi. 14). 'The apocalyptic writer is simply describing the heavenly city as it was shewn to him. On the foundations are the names of the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb. Now, we may fairly ask, What reason can be given why the beloved apostle should not have related this? Was he, who, with his brother James, sought for the highest places of honour in the future kingdom, likely to have depreciated the apostolic dignity, simply because he himself was one of the Twelve? And, on the other hand, Was he, whose personal modesty was as notable as his apostolic zeal, likely, in relating such high honour done to the Twelve, to insert a notice providing against the possible mistake being made of not counting himself among them?'<sup>1</sup> (Alford.)

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<sup>1</sup> The writer 'speaks no less objectively of the "prophets" among whom he certainly classes himself; and Paul uses the same figure in the same objective way of the Twelve' (Eph. iii. 5, ii. 20). See Bacon's *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 237.

When we turn to the external evidence concerning the authorship, it is found to be very strong in favour of the Apostle John. It falls into three classes, viz. (1) The evidence that the Apocalypse was written by John the Apostle; (2) the evidence that it was written by a John, whence it may be fairly presumed that the Apostle is meant; and (3) the evidence that it was regarded by the early church as inspired Scripture, and therefore presumably the work of an apostle.

(1) The earliest definite statement is found in the *Dialogue* of Justin Martyr (*circa* A. D. 140), to the effect that 'a certain man, whose name was John; one of the apostles of Christ; prophesied in a revelation (apocalypse) which came to him' that believers should reign a thousand years in Jerusalem. Tertullian (*circa* A. D. 200) frequently ascribes the book to John the Apostle; thus, 'for the Apostle John also in the Apocalypse describes a sword proceeding out of the mouth of the Lord'; 'This heavenly city was both known by Ezekiel and seen by the Apostle John.'

(2) The evidence under this head is only a degree less direct, and is conclusive, except in the one possible case that the author was not John the Apostle, but 'John the Presbyter' (see below). Irenæus (*circa* A. D. 180) declares frequently and decisively that the Apocalypse was written by 'John, a disciple of the Lord.' That he understood by this the Evangelist, is clear from a passage in which he describes him further as 'he who also leaned upon His breast, and hath himself given forth a Gospel, dwelling at Ephesus in Asia.' Clement of Alexandria, referring to the four and twenty elders, adds, 'as John says in the Apocalypse.' He at least 'knows only one John, the Apostle' (Bousset), and distinctly states that it was John the Apostle who 'on the death of the emperor went from the island of Patmos to Ephesus'; and in his *Commentary* on Matthew he plainly expresses the opinion that it was John, the son of Zebedee, who saw the visions

of the Apocalypse in the island. There is further the testimony of Eusebius that three different bishops (Melito of Sardis, Theophilus of Antioch, and Apollonius of Ephesus), all before the close of the second century, wrote books or treatises in which they used 'the Apocalypse of John' as authoritative. The Canon of Muratori (*circa* A.D. 200) says that 'John in the Apocalypse, though he writes to seven churches, yet says to all . . .', where it is clear from the context that the reference is to the Apostle. And the general opinion held in the first two centuries is proved in an indirect but striking way, by the form in which the Roman Presbyter Caius (*circa* A.D. 212) ascribes the authorship to Cerinthus: 'through visions purporting to be written by a great Apostle.'

(3) The evidence that the Apocalypse was regarded by the church of the second century as inspired Scripture is unusually copious. Laying aside as indistinct and indecisive the allusions to the Apocalypse which some have discovered in the letters of Polycarp and Ignatius, it seems probable that the book was known to Papias, and by him regarded as authoritative. The evidence of this is found in the fact that Andreas of Cappadocia, at the end of the fifth century, refers to Papias along with Irenæus, Methodius, and Hippolytus, as having testified to the genuineness of the Apocalypse, and proceeds to quote from a work by Papias his comment on Rev. xiii. 7-9. Now we know from Irenæus that Papias was 'a hearer of John,' and 'a companion of Polycarp,' and as he was also bishop in Hierapolis, within the circle of the Seven Churches, the fact that for him 'the Apocalypse ranked as authoritative' (Holtzmann) is of great importance.

The earliest indubitable citations from the book are found in the Letter from the churches of Lyons and Vienne, describing the persecution they underwent in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. They expressly quote the Book of Revelation as Scripture: 'That the Scripture might

be fulfilled, let him that is lawless be lawless still, and him that is righteous be righteous still.' To the same class of evidence belong the cases in which the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse are bracketed together, as by Hippolytus, one of whose works (the title of which was inscribed on his statue) was *Concerning the Gospel and Apocalypse of John*; and also by Origen, who speaks of John, 'who lay on Jesus' breast,' as the one who left a Gospel, and wrote also the Apocalypse.

All these testimonies are anterior to the date when the question of the authorship was first seriously raised by Dionysius. It is not necessary to adduce the testimony of later authorities to the apostolic and Johannine authorship. It is both abundant and definite, including nearly all the names of note in the church down to and including Jerome. The exceptions within the Catholic Church are Dionysius (*circa* A. D. 247), Eusebius the historian (*circa* A. D. 270-340), and Cyril of Jerusalem (*circa* A. D. 386); to them must be added the heretical sect of the *Alogi* at the end of the second century, the Roman Presbyter Caius (*circa* A. D. 205), and the Canons of the Council of Laodicea (*circa* A. D. 360). The *Alogi*, according to Epiphanius, rejected all the writings of John. Caius roundly attributed the Apocalypse to Cerinthus. Neither of them, therefore, betrays any sign of a tradition that it was the work of another John. This idea appears for the first time in the criticism directed against the book by Dionysius. His argument has been sketched above<sup>1</sup>. It turns wholly on the internal difficulties, and the contrast between the Apocalypse and the Gospel. But it is plain that, apart from a possible reference to the *Alogi*, he has no tradition of non-apostolic authorship to appeal to. 'That he [the author] is called John, and that this writing is John's, I will not deny. For I admit that it is the work of some holy and inspired man.' What he cannot

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 6.

comprehend is that it is by the son of Zebedee, who wrote the Gospel according to John, and the General Epistle. Casting about for some one on whom to fix the authorship, he hazards the opinion that there were many called after the Apostle John, and recalls the fact that there was at least one other who bore the name in the early church, John Mark. Whether he were the author, he would not like to say, for there is no record that he was ever in 'Asia.' 'But I think it was some other of those that were in Asia; since they say that there were two monuments at Ephesus, and that each of them is reported to be a monument of John.' It will be seen how the theory of two Johns had its rise, at least for Dionysius. A legend that there were two monuments or tombs at Ephesus, to both of which the name of John was attached, is its only basis. And for that legend, of course, more than one different explanation is readily conceivable. It is plain that no tradition had reached Dionysius, connecting the Apocalypse with a John who was known as 'John the Presbyter'; otherwise he would certainly have welcomed and recorded it. The silence of Dionysius on this head is, at least, as significant as the 'silence of Eusebius' on the other side.

The judgement of Eusebius can best be described as wavering, with an inclination to deny the full canonicity of the Apocalypse. But as there is reason to suppose that this inclination in his case was due to other than purely critical reasons, the fact that he wavers, and cannot justify to himself the dismissal of the book, tells rather in its favour.

Cyril of Jerusalem definitely omits the Apocalypse from his list of the canonical books of the New Testament; but he gives no reason for the omission, and does not hesitate to employ some of its language. The tendency however which is displayed by him, having been started doubtless by Dionysius, persisted and developed in the church of the East, and found formal expression in the

omission of the Apocalypse from the Canon, as defined by the Council of Laodicea.

On examining these criticisms of the book (which date from the end of the second century), the following points will be noted. (1) They are all subjective in character; they claim no external authority; they are based upon the objections which are felt by the reader, and may disappear on closer investigation. (2) They are prompted, at least in most cases, by *a priori* objections to the supposed teaching of the book. A burning question in the third century was connected with the Millennial reign of the saints. Was it in heaven or on earth? Was it to be conceived under spiritual, or under material, conditions? Now, the Apocalypse of John was understood to support very strongly one side of this controversy, and some at least of those who attacked it had cause to wish it removed on this ground. (3) With every inducement to produce such a tradition, if they knew of its existence, not one of these early critics of the Apocalypse asserted that it was written by 'John the Presbyter'; and yet taken together they represent a wide area of the church, within which we should certainly expect to find such a tradition if it existed. (4) Later investigation has added nothing to the internal objections against the Johannine authorship as urged, for example, by Dionysius. The assertion of the Christian consciousness, that this is an inspired and apostolic work, has really no more difficulty to meet in this respect now than it had when it made the assertion good in the fifth century.

The situation seems, therefore, to be this. The apostolic authorship and canonical authority of the Apocalypse were generally accepted, and went unchallenged, until towards the end of the second century. Then contrary views began to make their appearance. But when the evidence, direct and indirect, on either side, is weighed in respect of its date, its quantity, its quality, its freedom from bias, the external evidence in favour of the Johannine

authorship, as commonly understood, outweighs the other at every point.

There is, however, one theory of the authorship which diverts a considerable proportion of this evidence (all, in fact, which does not directly assert the apostolic authorship) from the traditional view, and applies it in a new direction. And as this theory has found considerable favour of late, it must be stated and examined. It is, in a word, that our Apocalypse was written, not by John the Apostle, but by another John, his contemporary, and himself a dweller in Asia Minor, and known as 'John the Presbyter.' This theory has for its sole historical basis a sentence of Papias, and the inference drawn from it by Eusebius, in combination with Dionysius' story about the two tombs at Ephesus. Papias, in giving an account of his habit of inquiring of all he met who had known 'the Presbyters' (or Elders) as to what they said, seems to draw a distinction between 'what Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any other of the disciples of the Lord said,' and 'what Aristion and the Presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say.' From this it is inferred: (1) That he knew of two 'disciples of the Lord,' both named John; that the one who, being mentioned along with others of the Twelve, may be assumed to be the son of Zebedee, belonged already to the past, while the other, the Presbyter, was still in life; (2) that the Presbyter lived in Asia Minor, where of course Papias' bishopric of Hierapolis was situated; (3) that the two tombs which were reported to be pointed out at Ephesus were not monuments to the same John, but tombs or monuments of the Apostle and the Presbyter; (4) that the conjecture of Dionysius is correct, and that the Apocalypse, which he found so difficult to trace to the same hand that wrote the Gospel, was written by the second John.

The earlier upholders of this theory, like Bleek, Düsterdieck, and Ewald, held that both Johns dwelt either contemporaneously or successively at Ephesus; but a

later development rejects wholly the tradition of the Apostle's living and dying there, makes the Presbyter the sole outstanding bearer of the name in that Christian community, and in fact ascribes to him not only the Apocalypse, but also the Fourth Gospel. The arguments for the theory in this form have been worked out with great fullness by Bousset in the Introduction to his *Commentary*.

It will be seen that this theory of the authorship, could it be established, would not seriously affect the authority of the Apocalypse, while, as regards the Gospel, it represents a distinct step of return towards the traditional view, inasmuch as it finds the author of both books among the personal disciples of Jesus, and indeed in that disciple who enjoyed his closest friendship. From this point of view the church need not hesitate to accept the theory, if it could be proved. But to me it seems unproved by the arguments, and disproved by the necessary inferences. Granting the first inference from the statements of Papias, it only serves to establish, so far as his authority will serve, the existence of a second John who, like the first, was a 'disciple of the Lord.' The inference that he lived in Asia is a good deal to build upon the fact that Papias refers to the things he 'says.' Thus the monuments at Ephesus rest only on a vague tradition, and are capable of several explanations besides that of Eusebius; and, in fact, Bousset very properly denies any weight at all to the inference from this tradition. But if it cannot be proved that there were two men of great influence in Asia in the second half of the first century, both called John, there is really no reason why the one John who certainly played a great part there should be the Presbyter rather than the Apostle.

And while the theory has not been proved, it involves very considerable difficulties, while the difficulty which it was originally adduced (by Dionysius) to meet has practically disappeared. We no longer feel constrained,

by the apparent differences between the Gospel and the Apocalypse, to seek for a second John to make him the author of the Apocalypse. The tendency of late is rather to recognize the same influence, if not the same hand, at work in both. Bousset, who is of this opinion, admits that the Gospel bears signs of having been written or transmitted by the disciple 'whom Jesus loved'—who leaned on his breast at the Supper; but in face of the Synoptic declaration that Jesus sat down to that Supper, 'and the twelve apostles with him,' it is very difficult to see how this disciple could be any other than one of the Twelve. It is no serious objection that Irenæus does not give the title of 'apostle' to the John whose authority he ranks so highly. In this he does not differ from Papias, who mentions several of the Twelve, and describes them, not as 'apostles,' but as 'disciples of the Lord.' And Irenæus all but gives the title directly to John when he speaks of 'John, the disciple of our Lord, and the rest of the apostles.'

But the greatest difficulty which is raised by this theory is that it postulates the entire disappearance of John the Presbyter from the memory of the church of the second century. It assumes that this John was so great a personality that he could write these Letters to the churches of Asia, and require no further introduction or credentials beyond his bare name, and yet that by the middle of the second century he was forgotten; that apart from the Apocalypse, or the Apocalypse and the Gospel, he did and said nothing which found record either in the memory or in the literature of the early church, while his authorship of these was made over to another man<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The attempt to pray in aid the evidence of Papias through Georgios Hamartolos to the effect that John the Apostle perished early at the hands of the Jews is rightly dismissed, e. g. by B. Weiss (*Einleitung*, p. 364, and note). The tradition that John lived until the time of Trajan 'is in itself thoroughly trustworthy, and

There is probably a better case to be made out from this theory than from any other which challenges the traditional view, and yet the proof is inadequate, and the difficulties it raises too great for it to carry conviction. And the view which does justice in the simplest way to all the facts is still the one expressed by Justin Martyr, that the Apocalypse was written by John the Apostle.

#### 6. CONNEXION WITH THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

It is not unfair to point out that nearly all, if not all, the attempts which have been made to find an author for the Apocalypse, other than John the Evangelist, have been due to a desire either to safeguard the Johannine authorship of the Gospel, or to discredit it. This motive proceeds, in the one case, on the conviction that the two cannot have the same author; in the other, on the conviction that whoever wrote the one wrote the other. The latter was certainly the opinion of the early church, and though it has been strenuously denied and thought to be disproved, it is the opinion which is once more in the ascendant now. The *Alogi* who rejected 'all the writings of John' did so for reasons connected with the Gospel, but they rejected the Apocalypse too—a striking indication of the relation between the two books as recognized at the close of the second century. Reference has already been made to the work of Hippolytus, which treated of the Gospel and the Apocalypse together, and to the direct statement of Origen that John 'who lay on Jesus' breast' left behind him a gospel and wrote the Apocalypse. These writers, and the church which they represented, must have been as fully conscious as we can be of all the internal reasons which suggest separate authorship for the two books. These reasons may be classified as connected with the general character and

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at any rate has not been shaken by the latest attempts to imagine for him an early death.'

contents of the respective books, the attitude of the writer to the readers, and the language both as to grammar and as to vocabulary—in each of which features a wide divergence can be felt between the one work and the other. But the difference can be accounted for in every particular, except the last, by the totally different subject and purpose of either book, involving different circles of ideas, different modes of expression, different attitudes of the writer's mind; no two classes of literature could, in fact, be more widely separated than the two to which these works respectively belong—a gospel and an apocalypse, history and prophecy, prose narrative and poetic symbolism. But the differences under the last head are much more difficult to account for; they can be felt by all, and are especially impressed on those who study the Revelation in Greek. For its Greek is like no other Greek with which we are acquainted. It reads like the work of one who was not so much ignorant of, as indifferent to, the grammatical rules of the language. In not a few passages the writer seems to have been thinking in Hebrew while he wrote in Greek. But when full weight has been given to all the phenomena of this class, there are others, no less striking, which serve to connect the diction of the Apocalypse with that of the other Johannine books.

It will be possible here to indicate these correspondences only in the most general way. For details the student may refer to the Appendix to Bousset's Introduction. As is there remarked: 'It is incomparably more important to observe that, along with all the difference, there is yet at the same time a certain remarkable correspondence, especially in the choice of imagery and in vocabulary.' The most striking instance is, of course, the fact that in the Apocalypse alone, of New Testament books, except the Fourth Gospel, the name, 'the Word of God' is applied to Christ (xix. 13). But besides this we find in the same two books alone Christ described as 'the

Lamb'; the Apocalypse, it is true, gives the word in another, the diminutive, form, but the correspondence is none the less striking. The image of 'living water,' 'water of life,' is common to Gospel and Apocalypse (John iv. 10, vii. 38; Rev. xxi. 6, xxii. 17); so also the symbol of the Shepherd, applied to Christ (John x. 1, 27, 28, xxi. 16; Rev. vii. 17).

Similar correspondence is found in the common predilection of the Gospel and the Apocalypse for certain words either in their usual or in some special sense. Thus the word translated 'true' (Rev. iii. 7, &c.) is used once by Luke, once by Paul, three times in the Epistle to the Hebrews, but nine times in the Gospel of John, four times in the First Epistle, and ten times in the Revelation. The phrase, 'he that overcometh,' so common in Revelation, is another link with the Fourth Gospel (xvi. 33) and the First Epistle (ii. 13, 14, iv. 4, v. 4, 5). The construction of the object after the words 'to hear' varies in Revelation (contrary to the established rule), and varies in like manner in the Fourth Gospel. There are other correspondences, some of which will be pointed out in the Commentary, such as the repeated occurrence of the words 'keep,' 'witness,' 'testimony,' and the frequency with which the thoughts arrange themselves in groups of three (i. 4, 5, 6, 9, &c.). In fact, the more closely we study the book, the more numerous do such correspondences appear. Their presence and their significance are recognized by most modern critics. The explanation given by some, that they are due to the hand of 'the latest editor,' is hardly compatible with the way in which we find them embedded in the very texture of the whole book: and though the possibility of some other explanation cannot be denied, yet, in view of the strong external testimony to a common authorship, it seems most in accordance with all the facts to hold that the Apocalypse, as we have it, and the Fourth Gospel, come directly or indirectly from the same source.

## 7. THE DATE OF THE APOCALYPSE.

In regard to the date of the Apocalypse, we have what is probably a unique phenomenon in New Testament criticism, namely, that the tendency of many modern scholars has been to assign the book to a date considerably *earlier* than that fixed by tradition. It has been dated as early as the reign of Nero (e.g. by Bruston), and by many, including our English scholars, Lightfoot, and Westcott, in the period immediately preceding the Fall of Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>. Others, like Weiss and Dürstler, place it in the reign of Vespasian, and probably *after* the Fall of Jerusalem<sup>2</sup>.

All those who maintain a date for the Apocalypse earlier than A.D. 90, do so on the ground of internal evidence alone, and of some particular interpretation of various historical allusions, and in face of external evidence which is unusually strong and definite. The external evidence in favour of the end of the reign of Domitian begins with Irenæus, and is practically unanimous. Irenæus (Bishop of Lyons in A.D. 177) says of the vision of the Apocalypse that 'it was seen not a long time ago, but almost in our own generation at the end of the reign of Domitian.' The reign of Domitian extended from A.D. 81 to 96. Clement of Alexandria remarks that John returned from his flight (or exile) to the island of Patmos 'on the death of the emperor'; and he was understood by Eusebius to refer to the Emperor Domitian. This is evidence which cannot be lightly set aside; and the external evidence to the contrary is of comparatively

<sup>1</sup> So Baur, Hase, Reuss, Hilgenfeld, and Beyschlag. See Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 360f.: 'the Apocalypse winds up the Apostle's career in the church of the Circumcision; the Gospel and the Epistles are the crowning result of a long residence in the heart of Gentile Christendom.'

<sup>2</sup> So Mr. Vernon Bartlet in *The Apostolic Age*, p. 404: 'instead of 95 A. D. some date like 75-80 becomes more likely.'

little weight. Epiphanius indeed fixes the return of John from Patmos 'in the time of the Emperor Claudius' (A.D. 41-54); but as in the same passage he speaks of the Apostle 'in the time of his old age, after ninety years of life,' we must either presume that he made a mistake as to the reign, or that he represents John as thirty-three years older than our Lord, and a man of sixty-three when he became an apostle. Theophylact and Tertullian, who are sometimes cited in favour of an early date, do not really throw light on the question. The primitive tradition is 'constant and unswerving' that John's exile took place, and the Apocalypse was written, towards the end of the reign of Domitian.

Those who maintain the earlier date (under Galba or Vespasian), rely on their interpretation of internal evidence; and this is in part indefinite and in part conflicting, according to the interpretation which is adopted. It may be grouped under four heads: the general condition of the Asian churches as reflected in the book; the special character of the persecution to which they had been, and were about to be, exposed; the reference to the temple; and the inferences that may be drawn from the enumeration of the emperors as the 'heads' of the Beast.

The situation of the Asian churches, as it is reflected in this book, has to be examined alike externally and internally. Externally, in its relation with the world, the church is seen as one which has emerged from at least one persecution, and is rapidly approaching another more widespread, more searching, and more violent than had been felt before. The persecution or persecutions through which it had already passed, had claimed victims, such as Antipas, from the local churches, and others probably from a wider field, whose voices are heard from below the altar. But it is nowhere suggested that the number of martyrs in the Asian churches had yet been great. The reference to Antipas (though it is a mistake to interpret it as though he were the sole victim) is best

understood if such cases were still individually memorable through their rarity. Rome is represented as already 'drunk with the blood of the saints.' The persecution has been sanguinary at Rome; spasmodic as yet in the province of Asia. This seems to point to a date after the Neronian massacre in A. D. 64, and before the general persecution under Domitian in A. D. 95. During this period, as Mommsen says, 'The persecution of the Christians was a standing matter, as was that of robbers.' But it was not an organized attempt to eradicate them.

But attention must also be given to any indications of the special ground on which the accusation and persecution of these Asian Christians was based. It is mainly because of his reading of these indications that Professor W. M. Ramsay gives the weight of his great authority to the late (and traditional) date of the Apocalypse. He maintains that the Christians who appear in the book as having suffered, or about to suffer, suffer as witnesses to the Name, or the word of God, 'which implies that their death springs directly from their acknowledgement of their religion, and not from conviction, even on false evidence, for specific crimes.' But this prosecution 'for the Name' marks the second stage of the church's relation to the state, the first being characterized by prosecution under charges of definite crimes—immoralities, and the like. But the argument is somewhat precarious, owing to the indefiniteness of the allusions in the Apocalypse on which it is based (ii. 13, vi. 9, xii. 11, xvii. 6). There is, it is true, no reference to accusation of crime, but on the other hand only one, and that an indirect, allusion to the Name as a test of discipleship; and the 'testimony of Jesus' signifies rather the revelation given by Christ than witness borne to his Name. It is, moreover, hardly possible to say at what point in the century the one process gave way to the other. Probably they overlapped; and in two contemporary documents (as it might be, Apocalypse and 1 Peter) we might find one form of

accusation prominent in the mind of one writer, and the other in that of the other.

The same dubiety attaches to another criterion of the same kind—the degree to which the worship of the emperor had become the normal test applied to one accused of being a Christian. The Apocalypse itself does not contain any indubitable reference to such a practice, and this confirms at least its first-century origin. But it does represent this emperor-worship as the form in which the diabolical hostility of the world to the church took shape, as the ever-present alternative to the worship of Christ, and as the snare and pit into which weak Christians were likely to fall. This also points towards the latter end of the century; but again it is a question of degree. The worship of 'Rome and Augustus,' with religious homage to the statue of the emperor, was no new thing, even in the middle of the century. Augustus had permitted the city of Pergamum to erect a temple in his honour so early as B.C. 29. And the fashion spread rapidly, especially in the eastern provinces; not only Domitian, but Caligula, fifty years before him, had insisted on his right to be honoured as 'Deus ac Dominus.' The status of emperor-worship as disclosed in the Apocalypse, though it favours the later date, is not inconsistent with the reign of Vespasian.

When we turn to consider the internal condition of the Asian churches, as indicated especially in the Seven Letters, our inference from what we observe will be largely subjective. We see Christian communities which, with at most one exception, had already laid themselves open to the sharp remonstrances of the Spirit. One had 'left its first love'; another, though it had 'a Name to live,' was dead; a third was eaten up with worldliness. Heresy and false teaching were present in most of them, tolerated in some, resisted not unsuccessfully by others. And it was not only the 'false teachers' of a transcended Judaism who infested these churches, as they had done

those of Galatia, for example; there were also doctrines and practices in which we cannot but see at least the germs of Gnostic heresy. Men were enticed from the simplicity of the gospel and the purity of Christian life towards a 'knowledge (*gnosis*) falsely so called,' fantastic speculations on 'deep things' of the world's origin, and God's nature, and forbidden trafficking with the powers of evil. To some it will seem that a degeneracy so widespread and so serious must have required the lapse of half a century to take place, since first the gospel had been joyfully accepted by these peoples; to others—bearing in mind the proverbial 'fickleness' of the Asian character, its proneness to religious excitement, and superstition, and the historical case of the Galatians who 'so quickly' removed unto 'a different gospel'—it will appear that twenty years is not too short a period to allow for this process.

Passing from general conditions to particular allusions, there are two of special importance to which many have appealed for a decisive answer as to the date. The first of these is found in the reference to Jerusalem and the temple in xi. 1 ff. (also to the twelve tribes in vii. 4-8; but see Commentary). It is argued that these must have been in existence when the book was written, and the date is therefore fixed before A. D. 70. The force of the argument, however, depends on two assumptions: first, that it is the literal and material city which is referred to, and, second, that this section is the original composition of the author. If these assumptions be correct, and the book be a unity, we could have no doubt that it was written before A. D. 70. But neither of them is established, and one at least is very doubtful. The view taken in this Commentary is that the vision of xi. 1 ff. did originally refer to the actual city, but that it is part of the material (extra-canonical, in this case) which John incorporated in his book. We are then free to suppose that he made this use of an earlier prediction at any time

*after* the fall of the city, giving to it in all probability an interpretation consistent with the new situation, connecting it with the spiritual city or people of God<sup>1</sup>. If this be the explanation of the passage, its incorporation may have taken place at any time in the last third of the century, with a slight probability in favour of the earlier part of it, when the contrast between the earthly temple and the spiritual church would be at once more poignant and more instructive.

The other specific references to historical events are found in the two passages in which the heads and horns of the Beast are described and enumerated (xiii. 1-3 and xvii. 7-12). It is now generally accepted that, by these 'heads,' we are to understand successive emperors of Rome, and by the 'wounded head' (xiii. 3) whose death-stroke is healed, as also by the beast that 'was, and is not, and shall come' (xvii. 8), the Emperor Nero, reported dead, but believed to be alive and expected to return<sup>2</sup>. With these fixed points it might be supposed to be easy to ascertain in which reign the author of these passages wrote. But even among those who start from them there is the widest possible divergence of opinion. This arises from two points of uncertainty: viz. From which of the Roman rulers does the list commence—from Julius Cæsar, or from Augustus—and are the brief reigns of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, to be reckoned? From chap. xiii it appears that the writer anticipated a series of seven emperors ('heads'), one of whom after receiving a death-stroke was to be healed; from chap. xvii that five of these emperors had fallen, and the writer, who was writing in the reign of the sixth, anticipated a short reign of the seventh, to be followed by an eighth, who was also 'of the seven.' The two passages, therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> The contrast may be illustrated from John ii. 19-21, where the Jews think that Christ is referring to the material temple, 'but he spoke of the temple of his body.'

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 56 ff.

correspond in predicting seven rulers of Rome, and one of them suggests that the author lived and wrote under the sixth. Now according as we reckon or omit the three 'pretenders,' whose reigns Suetonius describes as 'rebellio trium principum,' we arrive at Galba or Vespasian as the sixth (commencing with Augustus). If we begin with Julius Cæsar, we arrive at Nero. But all other indications are strongly against the reigns of either Nero or Galba. Hence we should conclude that the reckoning begins with Augustus, omits the 'pretenders,' and points to Vespasian as the ruler who was on the throne. And if from that standpoint John predicted a short reign for his successor (Titus), and the accession of a 'second Nero' to the throne (an eighth who was of the seven), his prediction was verified by history.

It is true that most commentators who adopt this interpretation in general see the reference to the emperors in chap. xiii in the 'horns' (ten) which have the diadems, and not in the 'heads' (seven). Of the seven heads they have no satisfactory explanation to give. Bousset says frankly that in this picture the heads have no longer any significance at all, and supposes that they have been simply taken over from older tradition. But this is too summary. In the passage in Daniel (vii. 6, 7), from which the imagery is derived, one creature has ten horns and the other four heads. For one creature with ten horns and seven heads there is no apocalyptic precedent; and even were there one unknown to us, there was no need for the Seer, who is dealing freely with his material, to take over a feature which had no meaning for his own prophecy. On the contrary, he employs the traditional imagery of horns and heads, but he deliberately adjusts the numbers to convey his own meaning. This is further indicated by the distinctive attributes which he assigns to the horns and the heads. The horns have diadems, the heads have 'names of blasphemy.' Towards the one the writer is neutral; on the other he passes judgement.

So far from the heads being a conventional and meaningless addition, it is on them rather than on the horns that the emphasis falls. The simplest explanation is one which I have not yet seen suggested, viz. that here as elsewhere the Apocalyptist represents, by different figures, the same persons in different aspects. The ten horns with diadems are the first ten rulers of the Roman empire, *including* Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, who at least claimed imperial sway. The seven heads with the 'names of blasphemy' are the first seven rulers, *excluding* the three who, though styled 'emperors' by their soldiers, did not reign long enough to have temples consecrated to their names and statues erected for their worship. The seventh head is identical with the tenth horn; both signify Titus.

To this explanation there is one obvious objection, namely, that in the second passage (xvii. 12) the ten horns of the scarlet-coloured Beast are explained as representing 'ten kings which have received no authority as yet.' These are commonly understood to refer to the Parthian rulers with whom the returning Nero was to ally himself. But the objection is not so serious as at first would appear. It is quite in accordance with the method of the book to use the same image in two distinct visions to represent different ideas. And there is no greater difficulty in making the horns, in the one case, represent Roman emperors, and in the other, Parthian rulers, than there is (with Bousset and others) in making the horns in the one case, and the heads in the other, represent emperors, and the heads in the first case represent nothing at all.

If our interpretation of these passages be correct, we have in them a very clear indication of the reign in which they were written. And with this, there is, as we have seen, nothing in the internal evidence of the book seriously to conflict. There remains, of course, the external evidence strongly in favour of the later date. But even Irenæus was removed by fifty years from the time of

which he was speaking, and if we wished to account for his making a mistake of twenty years in his chronology, an explanation might be found in the natural disposition to connect the exile of John with a widespread persecution and a notorious persecutor.

The solution which would most closely fit all the conditions of the problem (maintaining, as we are compelled to do, the unity of the book) would be, that it was composed in the reign of Vespasian, and reissued, with additions by the same hand, after the death of Domitian. If, however, it was written both by the same hand and at the same time, the probability is strong that it was written in the reign of Vespasian, after the Fall of Jerusalem, about the year A. D. 77.

#### 8. THE LEGEND OF THE RETURNING NERO.

Reference has already been made to the fact that some of the most mysterious language of the Apocalypse finds its explanation in a strange legend regarding the Emperor Nero. Nero died by his own hand in an obscure house, four miles from Rome, in June, A. D. 68. A few months later a rumour sprang up that he was not dead. 'About the same time,' says Tacitus, 'Greece and Asia were greatly alarmed by a false report that Nero was about to come, there having been various reports about his death, so that many pretended he was alive, and even believed it<sup>1</sup>.' At first, the story ran that he was somewhere in hiding; then it was asserted that he had fled to the Parthians, and would return thence supported by their armies. Suetonius relates that the emperor had himself spoken of such a flight, and also that it had been prophesied that he would become king of the East, and set up his throne in Jerusalem. The legend was strong enough to induce more than one pretender to give himself out as 'Nero,' and one of them at least was

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<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.* ii. 8; cf. Suetonius, *Nero*, 57.

recognized by the Parthian king. The expectation was especially strong and widespread in Asia Minor, as is shewn by two passages in the Sibylline Oracles, written by a Jew in Asia Minor soon after the eruption of Vesuvius. Thus (iv. 137): 'There shall come towards the West the rising strife of war, and the fugitive from Rome lifting his mighty lance, passing over the Euphrates with tens of thousands.' The fifth book of the Sibyllines also contains several prophecies which centre round this prediction, and also have points of contact with the Apocalypse. Nero is not named, but he is described (v. 143 ff., 361 ff.) in all his cruelty and ruthlessness; and his return is connected with a prediction of the destruction of Babylon, and also of the rebuilding of Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>.

Towards the end of the century, when it was no longer probable that Nero was alive, the expectation of his return underwent the modification that he was to return from the underworld. In the eighth book of the Sibyllines, dating from the reign of Marcus Aurelius, he has become a ghostly, supernatural figure, and is described as a wild monster, leaving behind him a dark track of blood.

It is one of the points in the interpretation of the Apocalypse, on which most modern scholars are agreed, that in this legend of 'Nero redivivus' we are to find the explanation of the 'wounded head' of xiii. 3, and of 'the beast that was, and is not, and shall come' in xvii. 11. The Antichrist is to be, at all points, a hellish parody of the Christ. As the church looked for, and prayed for, the return of the one, so her foes were to await the return or resurrection of the other; and the climax of the world-conflict was to take the shape of a struggle between the two, at the head of their respective armies. But, ere this stage was reached, Nero was to be an instrument of the Divine judgement upon Babylon-Rome, returning with Parthian hordes at his back to take vengeance on

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<sup>1</sup> See Bousset, *Offenbarung Johannis*, pp. 419, 475 ff.

the city which had cast off his yoke. This identification of Nero with Antichrist is not difficult to understand, in view of his character, his treatment of the Christians, and his position as a typical representative, the last in fact, of that royal line which had claimed for itself throughout the empire Divine honours and the worship of its subjects.

The interpretation of the 'number of the Beast' is so readily adapted to almost every conceivable personality, that it is only to be appealed to by way of confirmation. But when so many other features point in the same direction, it is noteworthy that this problem also meets its simplest solution, if we see in 666 a cryptogram for the name and title of the emperor in Hebrew, *Neron Kaisar*; for this, and this alone, explains at the same time the various reading attested by Irenæus; 616—a number which is arrived at by dropping the last letter of *Neron*, and adopting the more usual spelling 'Nero.'

#### 9. THE UNITY OF THE APOCALYPSE.

The difficulty of finding a satisfactory explanation of the Apocalypse as a whole, combined with the difficulties of harmonizing the various internal indications of date and authorship, has led to attempts being made to cut these knots by denying that the book, as we have it, belongs to one date, and proceeds from one man. The earliest of these attempts belongs to the beginning of the nineteenth century, but these were so completely driven off the field that, down to 1882, the unity of the book was regarded as established. At that time, however, the idea was revived by Völter, and in the next fifteen years a large number of German scholars (e. g. Vischer, Weizsäcker, Weyland, Pfeleiderer, Spitta) followed his example, and propounded various schemes for apportioning the work to different sources and different editors. Of these critical theories we may select three as typical, represented by Völter, Weyland, and Weizsäcker.

(1) Völter accounts for the Apocalypse in its present form by a theory of *expansion*. He assumes that its original foundation was a Jewish apocalypse, written before the Fall of Jerusalem, which has grown by successive additions, through different forms (four or five in all) to this final one, which is not earlier than the time of Hadrian. For such a process there are, indeed, parallels in contemporary literature, such as the *Ascension of Isaiah*, and the *Testament of the XII Patriarchs*, but they, at least, shew the marks of their various rescensions in a manner which is wholly absent from the Apocalypse of John, with its marked uniformity of highly characteristic style and diction. And when Völter has reconstructed the original foundation, by removing the work of subsequent hands, 'one asks oneself in wonder what could be the purpose or intrinsic meaning of the apocalyptic torso which is left. The alleged foundation gives indeed an impression of unity, but at the cost of cutting out everything that is characteristic and living, and offering a vast apocalyptic machinery (chaps. iv-xi) to produce the meagre conclusion of xiv. 14-20<sup>1</sup>.'

(2) The group of theories of which Weyland's may be taken as typical has this in common, that the Apocalypse is traced to a number of sources, some Jewish and some Christian, more or less loosely held together in a merely mechanical union, through links which have been supplied by one who acted rather as editor than as author.

Once more a parallel can be found in the supposed construction of other apocalyptic works such as Enoch, Ezra, and Baruch. In different forms of this theory the work of the Christian editor (or editors) varies in quantity; but in no case is it so considerable as to entitle him to the consideration of 'author.' And, as Bousset points out, they one and all give way before the indisputable uniformity of the book, as a whole, in language and style.

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<sup>1</sup> Bousset, *Offenbarung Johannis*, p. 151.

'If it were the case that in the Apocalypse we have "sources" brought into connexion in a wholly mechanical fashion, then certainly it must be possible to shew the existence of differences of diction to a quite distinguishable extent between the several sections. But, on the contrary, we find in the different parts of the Apocalypse an astonishing uniformity, down to the minutest particulars in the use of language, in style, in grammatical peculiarities, and in individual, unique terms of expression.' The evidence is to be found only in a somewhat minute study of the original text; and for this it must suffice here to refer the reader to the seventh section of Bousset's *Introduction* to his Commentary.

(3) The third group of theories on the literary origin of the Apocalypse may be represented by that of Weizsäcker (compare also Sabatier and Schoen). These account for the presence of sections in the Apocalypse, more or less numerous, which appear to destroy its plan or affect its unity, by suggesting that the writer quoted more or less freely from extra-canonical books which were current in his time. In its most moderate form, as exemplified, for instance, by Schoen, such a theory does not really impinge upon the 'unity' of the Apocalypse. Indeed, it provides—what no other theory yet suggested seems to secure—a way of maintaining the unity of the book against all attempts to dismember it, by explaining in the simplest way the presence of those elements on which the extreme critics have fastened as evidence of divergent originals.

It is, therefore, no infringement of our belief of the unity of the book, or of its apostolic authorship, if we are prepared to admit that there are in it some passages which the apostolic author quoted from earlier literature of the same class. Such a procedure would be quite in keeping with the practice of other writers of Scripture, especially the prophets of the Old Testament<sup>1</sup>. And

<sup>1</sup> For an exhaustive analysis of these unacknowledged quota-

there is strong probability for the suggestion that John employs such material, in the indubitable habit of his mind revealed by his use of the canonical books of the Old Testament. It has been already pointed out how large a proportion of the thought, and even of the language, of the Apocalypse is based upon reminiscence of the Old Testament. And besides the direct quotations, there is probably an equal amount of less direct allusions to the same sources. It is plain that the visions in Patmos were granted to a mind which was saturated with the ideas, the language, and the symbolism of the later prophets; and if, in their literary form, the visions came to be clothed so largely in traditional conceptions, derived from the Old Testament, there is all the more probability that they would borrow some of their material from the apocalyptic literature with which also the Jewish mind was so deeply impregnated. And if in the course of the book we find three or four passages which bear all the marks of a Jewish origin, in which what is specifically Christian is easily separable, and best accounted for as pointing the Christian application the writer was giving to an old prophecy, we have not only a new light cast upon the dark places of the Apocalypse, but we have therein a means of defence against those who would dismember it, and an opportunity of restoring it to the comprehension of the ordinary reader.

Opinions will vary as to the number of passages which should be thus marked as quotations. Those about which there seems the clearest evidence are three in number, and there are two others which might also be included. The arguments for the Jewish origin of vii. 4-8 (with which verses 1-3 ought probably to be included) will be found in the notes on the text. And while we could not have a better illustration of the connexion between what

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tions in the Old Testament see Canon Girdlestone's useful book, *Deuterographs*.

John had in his mind as reminiscence, and what he received through inspiration, we are also saved the necessity of adopting any of the expedients by which commentators have sought either to identify the 144,000 with the innumerable multitude, or to explain the one and the other, if they are distinct.

In xi. 1-13 we have another passage which bears many traces of having come originally from a Jewish source. It breaks the series of the Trumpets which is interrupted from ix. 21 to xi. 14. It presents the Seer, for the first time, as active rather than passive in the revelation, engaging like the prophets of the Old Testament in a symbolical action, as though he were rather the cynosure of the public eye than the describer of visions seen in solitude. It certainly seems to assume that the temple is still in existence, to overlook our Lord's prophecy concerning its approaching destruction, and to ignore his instruction to his disciples that they should abandon Jerusalem when they saw 'the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not.' It specially emphasizes the connexion of the 'two witnesses' with the times of the end, a feature which has a marked significance in Jewish apocalyptic; and it focusses expectation on what was to precede the coming of the Messiah rather than on the return of Christ, and this although the central figure of the book is the Lamb that had been slain. All these considerations make it extremely probable that the Apostle incorporates here a quotation from a Jewish apocalypse in which he saw a Christian value. The one phrase (8<sup>b</sup>) which is specifically Christian puts it beyond doubt that he understood the 'city' in a literal sense as the Jerusalem he had known.

The arguments for tracing chap. xii—the vision of the Woman, the Man-child, and the Dragon—to a similar origin are indicated in the notes to that passage. But we cannot agree with those who would extend the quotation to include also chap. xiii. Rather are these two

chapters related to each other in the same manner as the two parts of chap. vii. The earlier, which is quoted and adapted, becomes the foundation for the later, and provides at once introduction and imagery for the vision of the Christian Seer. In the former, in its original form, the Messiah is not yet born; neither his experience nor his function is that of the Messianic Figure as revealed, interpreted, and exemplified by Christ. But the Apostle saw that the prophecy was capable of a Christian application, and had in fact points of connexion with actual experiences and words of our Lord. These he indicated and emphasized by phrases and verses which are very easily distinguishable from the original of which he makes use.

There are two other passages for which reasons can be urged that they should be traced to a similar source, viz. chap. xviii—the Oracle on Babylon, reminiscent, not only in detail but as a whole, of the Old Testament prophets—and chap. xiii—the vision of the Beast and his Prophet. It has not, however, appeared to me necessary to adopt this view in regard to either of these passages. The second of them, in particular, seems to find its most satisfactory explanation in the Cæsar-worship which pressed with especial severity on the Christian church, and with increasing severity as the century advanced. The source of the imagery is doubtless to be traced in the Old Testament, and particularly in Daniel, but there is no sufficient reason for seeing a Jewish origin for the passage.

The recognition of three passages, therefore, as probably quotations from extra-canonical literature is supported, in each case, by internal evidence, and also by the plainly distinguishable habit of the writer's mind; and while in no sense impinging on the real unity of authorship, it removes the most serious difficulties which have been urged against it.

## 10. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK.

The immediate purpose of the Apocalypse is plainly stamped upon it from first to last. It was intended to strengthen and encourage the faith of the church in special circumstances of severe strain and impending persecution. The strain was due, in general, to the tarrying of our Lord in his expected return, which even those looked to see who had seen him go; and, in particular, to the external pressure and internal degeneration which had been the recent experience of the churches of Western Asia. The Christian communities both at Smyrna and at Philadelphia had suffered much through the hostility and intrigues of the Jewish population (ii. 9 f., iii. 8 f.). At Pergamum the pressure from without seems to have culminated, probably through the predominant position assigned to that city in the worship of the emperor. The church there had suffered unto blood. Antipas was probably only one of several who had died 'for the testimony of Jesus.' And the experience of Pergamum was typical of the situation to which its sister churches were equally exposed, and, in fact, all the churches over a much wider area. Rome was already intoxicated with the blood of the saints and 'martyrs of Jesus' (xvii. 6); her destined fall is understood to be the act of God avenging 'His holy apostles and prophets' (xviii. 20). The terrible persecution which marked the closing year of Nero's reign, though it was apparently confined to Rome and its neighbourhood, had not only reverberated through all the churches of Christ; it had inaugurated a policy of attack upon the Christians, and set the seal of imperial favour upon all attempts to suppress the new sect. Though there does not appear to have been any organized persecution directed against Christians everywhere before the time of Domitian, nevertheless many individuals in many places were called upon to suffer martyrdom at the instigation of Jewish hatred or private malice. Many already were the martyr-

souls gathered below the heavenly altar (vi. 9, 10), from whom the cry went up, 'How long, O Lord, dost thou not avenge our blood?' And instead of the Divine avenging it seemed as if only a time of greater suffering were at hand. All the signs of the times pointed to a fiercer and more organized persecution. The Roman state was claiming more and more insistently religious reverence from its subjects. Religion was to be identified with patriotism. Personified or incarnate in the figure of its emperor, the state demanded not only obedience but worship. Temples of Rome and the reigning emperor sprang up in every city of importance. To each of them was attached a guild or order of priests who were interested promoters of the new cult (xiii. 11-17). Refusal to pay homage to the sacred statue of the emperor was in itself an act of treason, a sin against the state; and zealous governors approved themselves as such by stringent search for those who were likely to refuse. It was no longer necessary to lay specific criminal charges against Christians, and to bring them home to them; the acknowledgement of the name of Christian or of Christ, the refusal to worship the image of the emperor was sufficient. Their enemies needed no longer to wait for a general persecution; it was enough for any one to lay an information against any individual, and he would be haled before a magistrate and compelled either to suffer or to recant.

At the same time the internal condition of the churches was such as greatly to intensify the strain on the faithful followers of Jesus, and to give ground for the dread lest they should not be able to withstand the coming storm. The love of many had grown cold; the spirit of worldliness had made havoc; heresy that touched the springs of moral life, heresy that was indeed soul-destroying, had appeared in several quarters, and in some had gone unchecked. Life both for the individual Christian and for the Christian community was at such a time essentially

a struggle, a struggle of great intensity and pathos to maintain purity of faith and life, with the ever-impending possibility of being called to a life and death struggle in the grasp of merciless cruelty.

The situation, therefore, was one which called for just such a book as this, to the faithful a summons to endurance and promise of early release, to the unfaithful a reproach and a warning, tender or stern according to the degree of their unfaithfulness, and upon the unbelieving and hostile world a denunciation of Divine wrath to come, which became in turn an assurance of speedy succour and deliverance to those who kept the testimony of Jesus.

The object of the book, therefore, is to nerve the trembling faith of the Asian churches in the first place, and through these of the whole church, to face the strain of the present, and the probable agony of the immediate future, in the triumphant assurance that 'the time is at hand,' the final judgement of God upon evil, and the return of Christ for salvation to his people. And this object is accomplished in part by the searching exhortations and the reassuring promises conveyed in the Seven Letters, and in part by the prediction of the course of events yet to intervene before the final consummation of victory and peace. These events are characterized by a continuous intensification of the fierceness of the conflict, due to the interposition, plain to the eye of faith, of 'principalities and powers' of wickedness on the one side and of God Himself on the other. The series of preliminary judgements, more than once repeated, have upon the workers of iniquity only the effect which the plagues of Egypt produced upon Pharaoh. They avail only to harden their hearts (ix. 20, 21), and to increase their fury against the people of God. Nevertheless the issue of the conflict is beyond doubt. For it has been already waged and brought to an end 'in heaven' (xii. 7, 8). The dragon, the great serpent, the author of all evil, has been cast out; if he continues the struggle upon earth,

it is as a beaten foe, and only for a brief and firmly limited period. Nevertheless, just because it is his final effort he is making, it involves the climax of wickedness and oppression upon earth. It is he that 'gives power' to the imperial monster of Roman power (xiii. 4), and he in turn at once deposes his power to (xiii. 12), and is supported by (xiii. 15), the third monster, who is identified with the false prophet (xix. 20), and probably represents the priestly guild entrusted with the duty of propagating and maintaining the blasphemous worship of the emperor. The whole force and horror of these evil powers is envisaged with the utmost clearness, but only in order to make more emphatic, more convincing, the assurance, which is the message of the book, that their time is short, that the armies of God are already in motion against them, that the fierce conflict towards which all things are hastening will issue in the manifestation of the supremacy of righteousness.

## II. CONSTRUCTION OF THE BOOK.

When once the great purpose and the supreme message of the book have been clearly grasped, the general lines of its construction are not difficult to make out. On the other hand, it is, and probably will always be, extremely difficult to fit all the parts and details into any continuous interpretation of the future. The book is not a prediction of future history in narrative form so much as the description of a series of visions, which deal with the events before the end, but are not easy to correlate with one another.

Three points bearing on its construction seem to be clear. First, there is no chronology, in our sense of the word, in the book. There is, indeed, no room for it, and from a Christian point of view there is no right to expect it. The writer of this book would be at issue with most of the other writers in the New Testament if he placed

the expected end outside his own generation. Paul had thought that some would be still alive when the Lord came. Peter, almost in the words of this Apocalypse, assures his readers that 'the end of all things is at hand.' The generation who had known the apostles grew wearied of waiting, as one after another 'fell asleep,' and began to cry 'where is the promise of his coming?' The writer of the Apocalypse replies that 'the time is at hand' (i. 3, xxii. 10); the things he describes are those which 'must shortly come to pass' (i. 1, xxii. 6); he hears the Lord himself saying, 'Behold, I come quickly' (xxii. 7, 12, 20). And though we have learnt to see that the *form* in which the primitive church looked for that return was not realized as they expected, but that Christ has come again in his abiding Spirit, that he has come and comes in every *crisis* or judgement-manifestation in the affairs of men, and believe that he is still to come, 'the second time unto salvation,' we must not allow the understanding into which we have been led by the Spirit to make us misunderstand the thought of the second generation of believers. For them this horizon of time was the horizon of their own time, and there was no room for an elaborate chronology of the future. The periods which are referred to, the 'three days and a half' (xi. 9), 'the 1260 days' (xii. 6), the 'forty and two months' (xiii. 5), even the 'thousand years' (xx. 4); are all conventional symbols, whose meaning lies not in the numbers themselves, but in the ideas with which they were traditionally associated. A little examination of the use of such figures in apocalyptic literature will shew that, while seven and ten and its multiples are traditional symbols of completeness, and stand for the periods of Divine activity or rule, the 'time and times and half a time,' of which 'the 1260 days' and the 'forty and two months' are simply transliterations, symbolize the converse of completeness, its antithesis, the broken period, the activity or rule of Antichristian power.

Such calculations as have been so commonly based on the fancied chronology of the Apocalypse are not only alien from its true interpretation; they are precluded by the principle laid down by our Lord himself and recognized within this book. The time of the end is a secret reserved in the mind of the Most High alone: 'of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.' This was clearly recognized by the early church, in whose understanding it was firmly fixed that 'the day of the Lord' would come 'as a thief' (Rev. iii. 3, xvi. 15; 2 Pet. iii. 10). The perpetually-recurring admonition to watchfulness would have had no meaning had it been possible to extort from Scripture the secret of the date of the end.

Secondly, we have to recognize the character of the progression of events in the unveiling of the penultimate future. There have been two ways of regarding this progression. Some interpreters have sought to trace it in a straight line, the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Book, for example, representing series of events which are to succeed one another in time, and lead on by three connected stages to the Judgement and End of all things. Others, seeing the difficulty of thus relating the series, each of which appears to reach a climax immediately preceding the end, and the still greater difficulty of bringing other parts of the book into this direct line, have adopted the theory of 'Recapitulation,' assuming that the successive series of visions set forth, in different forms, the same series of events, and thus explaining the apparent climax to which each leads as immediately preceding the end. Each of these systems is involved in its own difficulties, and the truth probably lies between them, in the recognition that the line of progression is neither straight nor circular, but spiral. It is like upward progress round a circular mountain, in which each complete circle finds the traveller at a point above that from which he started, a point also

from which he can behold the peak. Each series of judgements completes one circle, but also brings the Seer to a point from which he sees the end. But the end is not yet, and he starts on another sweep of outlook upon coming judgements, to arrive again at the point whence the end seems almost at hand. Thus the method of progression answers to what has been often observed in history, viz. that from time to time a cycle of human wickedness seems to have run its course, a harvest of Divine judgement has been reaped, and men hold their breath in expectation of the end; but 'the end is not yet,' and another cycle commences; judgement indeed has fallen, but the final judgement is still to come—only it is nearer.

A third point to be recognized is that, though the visions of the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Book, followed by the visions of the returning Christ, his victory and reign, and the new Jerusalem, seem to give a systematic groundwork to the whole, this scheme is broken at several points by the introduction of other material which serves the writer's purpose in various ways, but destroys the symmetry of the scheme. Thus between the first and the seventh Seals is inserted the 'consolatory vision' of the seventh chapter; between the sixth and the seventh Trumpets the explanatory and consolatory visions of chaps. x, xi. 13; between the Trumpets and the Book the long section chaps. xii-xiv, in which xii is itself introductory to xiii. The probable origin of these sections has been referred to above (§ 9).

John records in this book the visions he had seen in Patmos, but he does more. The visions become the starting-point of his prophetic activity. Probably he has left his isle of banishment before he commits to writing what had been given him to see. And as he weaves together his record, he weaves in other things—the fruit of his own meditation on his experience, fragments and echoes of Old Testament prophecy and apocalypse, and,

it may be, fragments of other apocalypses which were precious in his sight. It is impossible, and it is unnecessary, to distinguish what he had actually seen from the thoughts and memories and predictions which he wrought into the record of his visions. He had seen a picture or pictures of infinite wonder; he had heard the voice of Christ commanding him to write not only 'the things which thou hast seen,' but also 'the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.' He was at once describer and interpreter of his visions, delineator of the situation of the world as seen *sub specie aeternitatis* and prophet of the things that 'must shortly come to pass.' Under the form of an Apocalypse he spoke as a prophet.

## 12. THEOLOGY OF THE APOCALYPSE.

The most striking fact in regard to the theology of the book is the position therein assigned to the Lord Jesus, the recognition of his Divine glory and of his redeeming work. In the eyes of the writer he indeed is the true author of the book. He is its centre, and at every point is seen exalted in supreme authority over human affairs.

Indications are not wanting of the writer's familiarity with the historical Jesus. He frequently uses the name which specially marks his human nature (i. 9, xii. 17, xxii. 16, &c.); he describes him as 'of the tribe of Judah,' and the house of David; he refers to his death at Jerusalem (xi. 8), to his resurrection (i. 5, 18), and to his exaltation to the Father's throne (iii. 21, and, indirectly, xii. 5). He alludes to the Twelve Apostles (xxi. 14), and echoes more than one of the recorded sayings of Jesus.

But for him the Jesus whom he had 'known in the flesh' is lost in the glory of the exalted Lord. He is 'the Lord of lords, and King of kings' (xvii. 14, xix. 16). His existence reaches back to before the beginning of things created; himself the principle from which all creation

issues (iii. 14), he is the absolutely Living One, by whom it can be said, as God alone can say, 'I am the first and the last' (cf. Isa. xlv. 6). To him, therefore, is committed the unfolding of the book of human destiny, the waging of the final conflict with evil, the holding of the Divine assize. All these functions which men had been taught to recognize as absolute prerogatives of the Divine, John lays simply upon Christ. And not these only, which belong to the future, but those attributes which had been displayed in earlier revelation as the peculiar property of the Most High are similarly assigned to Jesus Christ. In the opening vision of the book the Apostle takes one after another of those phrases which had been consecrated from old times to the description of the Most High God, those attributes in which by prophet and psalmist he had been apparelled, and applies them to Christ as though they were recognized to be his by right. The description of the 'Ancient of Days' in Daniel is transferred to him. He holds the keys of Hades and of death. He searches the hearts of men. He shares in the Divine honour paid to God: even angels join in worshipping 'God and the Lamb' (v. 11).

This complete and unhesitating acknowledgement of the Divine Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ is the more remarkable when we give due weight to the intense Hebraism of the writer. A Jew of the Jews, his mind saturated in Hebrew literature, both canonical and extra-canonical, a true son of the race to which Monotheism had become a passion, and the ascription of Divine honour to any other than God a horror and a blasphemy, John nevertheless sets Jesus side by side with the Almighty. One meaning of this phenomenon is plain. It is the most convincing proof of the impression made by Jesus upon his disciples, one which had been sufficient to revolutionize their most cherished religious belief; for them he had the value of God. And were the authenticity or credibility of our gospel records to be undermined,

this fact would remain; and we should require to construct something similar to the gospel story to account for it. Indeed, in so far as the attempt to destroy the authority of the gospel is due to a desire to remove the miraculous from the person and character of Jesus, it seems condemned to futility, in view of this nothing less than miraculous result of the impression made by his personality upon his contemporaries.

But it is not only the Person of Christ which is so highly exalted in the Apocalypse; his work in the redemption of man, by the sacrifice of himself, is also one of the dominant ideas of the book. This is most characteristically exhibited in the title of 'the Lamb,' which recurs so often as the designation of Christ. And it is no mere title, but a description of our Lord in the special aspect of his relation to men which is revealed in his death upon the cross—as is manifest from passages like vii. 14, 'These are they which . . . have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,' and the Hymn of Praise to the Lamb (v. 9), 'Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests.' Here too it is said of Christ that he 'loveth us, and loosed (or, washed) us from our sins by his blood'; it is as a Lamb that Christ takes his place in the centre of the heavenly host; to him belongs the book of life wherein are written the names of the redeemed; and he is at once the light and the temple of the new Jerusalem. It may be doubted whether even in the New Testament there is a phrase which leads more directly to the heart of the atonement than the description of our Lord as 'the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the theology of the Apocalypse see especially Stevens, *New Testament Theology*, and T. B. Strong in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, iii. p. 690 ff.

It is this which gives the Apocalypse its place at the close and climax of the New Testament, this which gives it its place in the hearts of Christ's disciples. It describes, as no other book does, the glory of our ascended Lord, and the triumphant issue of his conflict with evil; the pictures which it draws of heaven and those that dwell there, of the new life where 'there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain,' commend themselves to the Christian heart, not alone for their intrinsic beauty, but because Christ is so plainly set forth as the Lord of that life, and his sacrifice as the way by which men attain unto it.

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## GUIDES TO STUDY

The best preparation for closer study of the Revelation is the careful perusal of the relative articles in HASTINGS' *Dictionary of the Bible*, e.g. 'Apocalyptic Literature,' 'Revelation,' 'Parousia,' 'Angels,' 'Eschatology of the Apocalyptic Literature,' 'John, Apostle,' 'Millennium,' 'Man of Sin,' &c.

Articles on the same subjects in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* may also be consulted, and HARNACK'S 'Apocalyptic Literature,' and 'Millennium,' in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Of Commentators proper the safest guide in English is still ALFORD in his *Greek Testament*.

Of Expositors :—

MILLIGAN, *Expositor's Bible; Lectures on the Apocalypse; Discussions on the Apocalypse*.

MONRO GIBSON, *Apocalyptic Sketches*.

Among foreign scholars this volume owes much and most to BOUSSET; the author of the last edition of Meyer's *Commentary*.

To this should be added :—

SCHOEN, *L'Origine de l'Apocalypse*.

SPITTA, *Offenbarung Johannis*.

HOLTZMANN, *Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament*.

WEISS (B.), *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*.

GUNKEL, *Schöpfung und Chaos*.

BOUSSET, *Der Antichrist*.

HÜHN, *Die Messianischen Weissagungen*.

## ANALYSIS OF THE APOCALYPSE

- 1. 1-8. The superscription and address.**  
Superscription or expanded title (1-3).  
Address or salutation, rising into an ascription of praise (4-8).
- i. 9-20. Prologue. The vision of the Son of Man.**  
The Seer and his circumstances (9, 10).  
The voice and vision of the Son of Man (11-16).  
Commission to write (17-20).
- ii-iii. The Letters to the Seven Churches.**  
Ephesus (ii. 1-7), Smyrna (8-11), Pergamum (12-17), Thyatira (18-20), Sardis (iii. 1-6), Philadelphia (7-13), Laodicea (14-22).
- iv-v. The vision of eternal realities in heaven.**
  - iv. The glory of the Creator.
  - v. The glory of the Redeemer.The Sealed Book (1-5), the Lamb (6-8), the praise of the Lamb (9-14).
- vi-(vii)-viii. 1. The Seven Seals.**  
The first (vi. 1-2), second (3, 4), third (5, 6), fourth (7, 8), fifth (9-11), sixth (12-17), seventh (viii. 1).
  - [vii. First parenthesis: vision of the redeemed.  
The sealed of the House of Israel, vii. 1-8.  
The redeemed of all peoples, vii. 9-17.]
- viii. 2-(x-xi. 13)-xi. 19. The Seven Trumpets.**  
Preparation (viii. 2-6), the first (7), second (8, 9), third (10, 11), fourth (12, 13), fifth (ix. 1-12), sixth (13-21), seventh (xi. 14-19).
  - [x-xi. 13. Second parenthesis.
    - x. An angel communicates future prophecies through a 'little book.'
    - xi. 1-13. Two ancient prophecies touching the temple and the two witnesses.]

[xii—xiv. **Third parenthesis: visions of the opposing forces.**

xii. Vision of the Woman, the Man-child, and the Dragon.

xiii. Vision of the First Monster (1-10), and the Second Monster, the False Prophet (11-18).

xiv. Vision of the Lamb on Mount Zion (1-5), proclamation of judgement and salvation (6-13), vision of the Son of Man in power (14-20).]

**xv—xvi. The Seven Bowls.**

Preparation (xv. 1—xvi. 1), the first (2), second (3), third (4-7), fourth (8, 9), fifth (10, 11), sixth (12-16), seventh (17-21).

**xvii—xix. 10. Vision of the great harlot (Babylon-Rome) and her destruction.**

xvii. Vision of the Woman (1-6), interpretation of the symbols (7-18).

xviii. Triumph-song over Babylon.

xix. 1-10. The Hallelujahs in heaven, announcement of the Bride.

**xix. 11—xx. Vision of the returning and victorious Christ.**

xix. 11-16. The returning Christ.

xix. 17-21. Destruction of both the First and the Second Monsters.

xx. The binding of Satan (1-3), the 'first' resurrection' and 'Millennium' (4-6), final conflict (7-10), final judgement and resurrection (11-15).

**xxi—xxii. 5. Vision of the New Jerusalem.**

The Holy City from afar (xxi. 1-8), the same more fully described (9—xxii. 5).

**xxii. 6-17. Conclusion.**

Warnings, admonition, and assurances.

**xxii. 18-21. Epilogue.**

THE REVELATION  
OF  
ST. JOHN THE DIVINE  
AUTHORIZED VERSION

# THE REVELATION

OF

## ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

- 1 THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave **Chap. 1**  
unto him, to shew unto his servants things which  
must shortly come to pass; and he sent and **Source,**  
signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John: **channel,**  
2 who bare record of the word of God, and of the **and sub-**  
testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that **ject of**  
3 he saw. Blessed *is* he that readeth, and they that **Apoca-**  
hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those **lypse.**  
things which are written therein: for the time *is*  
at hand.
- 4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: **Salutation**  
Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, **and**  
and which was, and which is to come; and from **doxology.**  
5 the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and  
from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and*  
the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of  
the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us,  
and washed us from our sins in his own blood,  
6 and hath made us kings and priests unto God  
and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for  
7 ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with  
clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also*  
which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth

Chap. 1 shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. 8  
 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Vision of  
 the Son of  
 Man.

I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance *was* as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last; *I am* 18

he that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am  
 alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of  
 19 hell and of death. Write the things which thou  
 hast seen, and the things which are, and the things  
 20 which shall be hereafter ; the mystery of the seven  
 stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the  
 seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are  
 the angels of the seven churches : and the seven  
 candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven  
 churches.

2 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write ; Letters to  
 the Seven  
 Churches :  
 Ephesus.  
 These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars  
 in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the  
 2 seven golden candlesticks ; I know thy works, and  
 thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst  
 not bear them which are evil : and thou hast tried  
 them which say they are apostles, and are not, and  
 3 hast found them liars : and hast borne, and hast  
 patience, and for my name's sake hast labour-  
 4 ed, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have  
*somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy  
 5 first love. Remember therefore from whence thou  
 art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ; or  
 else I will come unto thee quickly, and will  
 remove thy candlestick out of his place, except  
 6 thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest  
 the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.  
 7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit  
 saith unto the churches ; To him that overcometh  
 will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the  
 midst of the paradise of God.

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna Smyrna.  
 write ; These things saith the first and the last,

Chap. 2 which was dead, and is alive ; I know thy works, 9  
 and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)  
 and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they  
 are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of  
 Satan. Fear none of those things which thou 10  
 shalt suffer : behold, the devil shall cast *some* of  
 you into prison, that ye may be tried ; and ye shall  
 have tribulation ten days : be thou faithful unto  
 death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He 11  
 that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith  
 unto the churches ; He that overcometh shall not  
 be hurt of the second death.

Perga-  
 mum.

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos 12  
 write ; These things saith he which hath the sharp  
 sword with two edges ; I know thy works, and 13  
 where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's seat *is* :  
 and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not  
 denied my faith, even in those days wherein  
 Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain  
 among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have 14  
 a few things against thee, because thou hast  
 there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who  
 taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the  
 children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto  
 idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou 15  
 also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicol-  
 aitanes, which thing I hate. Repent ; or else 16  
 I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight  
 against them with the sword of my mouth. He 17  
 that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith  
 unto the churches ; To him that overcometh will  
 I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give  
 him a white stone, and in the stone a new name

written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

- 18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira Thyatira.  
write ; These things saith the Son of God, who  
hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet  
19 *are* like fine brass ; I know thy works, and charity,  
and service, and faith, and thy patience, and  
thy works ; and the last *to be* more than the first.  
20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee,  
because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which  
calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce  
my servants to commit fornication, and to eat  
21 things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space  
to repent of her fornication ; and she repented  
22 not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them  
that commit adultery with her into great tribula-  
23 tion, except they repent of their deeds. And I  
will kill her children with death ; and all the  
churches shall know that I am he which searcheth  
the reins and hearts : and I will give unto every  
24 one of you according to your works. But unto  
you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many  
as have not this doctrine, and which have not  
known the depths of Satan, as they speak ; I will  
25 put upon you none other burden. But that which  
26 ye have *already* hold fast till I come. And he that  
overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end,  
27 to him will I give power over the nations : and he  
shall rule them with a rod of iron ; as the vessels  
of a potter shall they be broken to shivers : even  
28 as I received of my Father. And I will give him  
29 the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him  
hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Chap. 3  
Sardis.

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

Philadel-  
phia.

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia 7  
write; These things saith he that is holy, he that  
is true, he that hath the key of David, he that  
openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and  
no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I 8  
have set before thee an open door, and no man  
can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and  
hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.  
Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of 9  
Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but  
do lie; behold, I will make them to come and  
worship before thy feet, and to know that I have  
loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of 10

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

- 11 Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou  
12 hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God : and *I will write upon him* my new name.  
13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

- 14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodicea.  
Laodiceans write ; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the  
15 creation of God ; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot : I would thou wert cold or  
16 hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my  
17 mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked : I  
18 counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine  
19 eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten : be zealous  
20 therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup

Chap. 3 with him, and he with me. To him that over- 21  
 cometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne,  
 even as I also overcame, and am set down with  
 my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let 22  
 him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The glory  
 of the  
 Creator.

After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* 4  
 opened in heaven: and the first voice which I  
 heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with  
 me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew  
 thee things which must be hereafter. And im- 2  
 mediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a  
 throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the  
 throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a 3  
 jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rain-  
 bow round about the throne, in sight like unto an  
 emerald. And round about the throne *were* four and 4  
 twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and  
 twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment;  
 and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And 5  
 out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunder-  
 ings and voices: and *there were* seven lamps of  
 fire burning before the throne, which are the seven  
 Spirits of God. And before the throne *there was* 6  
 a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst  
 of the throne, and round about the throne, *were*  
 four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And 7  
 the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second  
 beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face  
 as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying  
 eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six 8  
 wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes  
 within: and they rest not day and night, saying,  
 Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was,

9 and is, and is to come. And when those beasts  
 10 give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat  
 on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the  
 four and twenty elders fall down before him that  
 sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for  
 ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the  
 11 throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to  
 receive glory and honour and power: for thou  
 hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they  
 are and were created.

5 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on  
 the throne a book written within and on the back-  
 2 side, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong  
 angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is  
 worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals  
 3 thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth,  
 neither under the earth, was able to open the  
 4 book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much,  
 because no man was found worthy to open and to  
 5 read the book, neither to look thereon. And one  
 of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the  
 Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath  
 prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven  
 6 seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst  
 of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the  
 midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been  
 slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which  
 are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the  
 7 earth. And he came and took the book out of  
 the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts  
 and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the  
 Lamb, having every one of them harps, and

The Book  
 with  
 Seven  
 Seals.

The  
 praise  
 of the  
 Lamb.

**Chap. 5** golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers  
of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, 9  
Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open  
the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast re-  
deemed us to God by thy blood out of every  
kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and 10  
hast made us unto our God kings and priests:  
and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, 11  
and I heard the voice of many angels round about  
the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the  
number of them was ten thousand times ten  
thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying 12  
with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was  
slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom,  
and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.  
And every creature which is in heaven, and on 13  
the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in  
the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying,  
Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be*  
unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto  
the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts 14  
said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell  
down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and  
ever.

**Opening  
of Seven  
Seals.**

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the 6  
seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder,  
one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.  
And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he 2  
that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was  
given unto him: and he went forth conquering,  
and to conquer. And when he had opened the 3  
second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come  
and see. And there went out another horse *that* 4

*was* red : and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another : and there was given  
5 unto him a great sword. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse ; and he that sat on him had a pair of  
6 balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny ; and *see* thou hurt not the oil and the  
7 wine. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come  
8 and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse : and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with  
9 the beasts of the earth. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God,  
10 and for the testimony which they held : and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our  
11 blood on them that dwell on the earth ? And white robes were given unto every one of them ; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as  
12 they *were*, should be fulfilled. And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake ; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became

**Chap. 6** as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the 13  
 earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs,  
 when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the 14  
 heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled  
 together; and every mountain and island were  
 moved out of their places. And the kings of the 15  
 earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and  
 the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every  
 bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in  
 the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and 16  
 said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and  
 hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the  
 throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the 17  
 great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be  
 able to stand?

**Angel of  
 the Winds,**

And after these things I saw four angels standing 7  
 on the four corners of the earth, holding the four  
 winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow  
 on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.  
 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, 2  
 having the seal of the living God: and he cried  
 with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it  
 was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, 3  
 Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees,  
 till we have sealed the servants of our God in  
 their foreheads. And I heard the number of them 4  
 which were sealed: *and there were* sealed an  
 hundred *and forty and four* thousand of all the  
 tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of 5  
 Juda *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe  
 of Reuben *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the  
 tribe of Gad *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of 6  
 the tribe of Aser *were* sealed twelve thousand.

**Number  
 of the  
 sealed.**

Of the tribe of Nephthalim *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses *were* sealed  
7 twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon *were*  
sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi  
*were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of  
8 Issachar *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the  
tribe of Zabulon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of  
the tribe of Joseph *were* sealed twelve thousand.  
Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve  
thousand.

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, **Great**  
which no man could number, of all nations, and **multitude**  
kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before **of the**  
the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with **redeemed.**  
10 white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried  
with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God  
which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the  
11 Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the  
throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts,  
and fell before the throne on their faces, and  
12 worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and  
glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour,  
and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever  
13 and ever. Amen. And one of the elders an-  
swered, saying unto me, What are these which are  
arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?  
14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he  
said to me, These are they which came out of  
great tribulation, and have washed their robes,  
and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.  
15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and  
serve him day and night in his temple: and he  
that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

Chap. 7 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any 16  
 more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor  
 any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of 17  
 the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them  
 unto living fountains of waters : and God shall  
 wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Seventh  
 Seal. Pre-  
 paration  
 for trum-  
 pets.

And when he had opened the seventh seal, 8  
 there was silence in heaven about the space of  
 half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which 2  
 stood before God ; and to them were given seven  
 trumpets. And another angel came and stood at 3  
 the altar, having a golden censer ; and there was  
 given unto him much incense, that he should offer  
*it* with the prayers of all saints upon the golden  
 altar which was before the throne. And the 4  
 smoke of the incense, *which came* with the prayers  
 of the saints, ascended up before God out of the  
 angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and 5  
 filled it with fire of the altar, and cast *it* into the  
 earth : and there were voices, and thunderings,  
 and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the 6  
 seven angels which had the seven trumpets  
 prepared themselves to sound.

Blowing  
 of the  
 trumpets.

The first angel sounded ; and there followed 7  
 hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were  
 cast upon the earth : and the third part of trees  
 was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.  
 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a 8  
 great mountain burning with fire was cast into the  
 sea : and the third part of the sea became blood ;  
 and the third part of the creatures which were in 9  
 the sea, and had life, died ; and the third part of  
 the ships were destroyed. And the third angel 10

sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of  
11 waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters,  
12 because they were made bitter. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for  
13 a third part of it; and the night likewise. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

9 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star <sup>Fifth trumpet.</sup> fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him  
2 was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by  
3 reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the  
4 earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing; neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in  
5 their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as

## Chap. 9

the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power *was* to hurt men five months. And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue *is* Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath *his* name Apollyon. One woe is past; *and*, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

## Sixth trumpet.

And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen *were* two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the

horses *were* as the heads of lions ; and out of their  
18 mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By  
these three was the third part of men killed, by  
the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone,  
19 which issued out of their mouths. For their  
power is in their mouth, and in their tails : for  
their tails *were* like unto serpents, and had heads,  
20 and with them they do hurt. And the rest of the  
men which were not killed by these plagues yet  
repented not of the works of their hands, that they  
should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and  
silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood : which  
21 neither can see, nor hear, nor walk : neither  
repented they of their murders, nor of their  
sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their  
thefts.

10 And I saw another mighty angel come down The angel  
with the  
Little  
Book. from heaven, clothed with a cloud : and a rainbow  
*was* upon his head, and his face *was* as it were the  
2 sun, and his feet as pillars of fire : and he had in  
his hand a little book open : and he set his right  
foot upon the sea, and *his* left *foot* on the earth,  
3 and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion  
2 roareth : and when he had cried, seven thunders  
4 uttered their voices. And when the seven thun-  
ders had uttered their voices, I was about to  
5 write : and I heard a voice from heaven saying  
unto me, Seal up those things which the seven  
6 thunders uttered, and write them not. And the  
angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon  
7 the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware  
by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created  
heaven, and the things that therein are, and the

**Chap. 10** earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea,  
 and the things which are therein, that there should  
 be time no longer: but in the days of the voice of 7  
 the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound,  
 the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath 8  
 declared to his servants the prophets. And the  
 voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me  
 again, and said, Go *and* take the little book which  
 is open in the hand of the angel which standeth 9  
 upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went  
 unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the  
 little book. And he said unto me, Take *it*, and  
 eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but  
 it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I 10  
 took the little book out of the angel's hand, and  
 ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey:  
 and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.  
 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again 11  
 before many peoples, and nations, and tongues,  
 and kings.

Measuring  
 of the  
 temple.

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: 11  
 and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure  
 the temple of God, and the altar, and them that  
 worship therein. But the court which is without 1  
 the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is  
 given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall  
 they tread under foot forty *and* two months. And 3

The Two  
 witnesses.

I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they  
 shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* three- 4  
 score days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the  
 two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing 5  
 before the God of the earth. And if any man will  
 hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and

- devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.
- 6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.
- 7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord
- 9 was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer
- 10 their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented
- 11 them that dwelt on the earth. And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.
- 12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies be-
- 13 held them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.
- 14 The second woe is past; *and*, behold, the third
- 15 woe cometh quickly. • And the seventh angel

Seventh trumpet.

**Chap. 11** sounded ; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four 16 and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God 17 Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come ; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, 18 and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great ; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was 19 opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament : and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

**The  
Woman,  
the Man-  
child, and  
the  
Dragon.**

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven ; 12 a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars : and she being with child cried, 2 travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven ; 3 and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the 4 stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth : and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a 5

man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron : and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days.

7 And there was war in heaven : Michael and his angels fought against the dragon ; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not ; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world : he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ : for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony ; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea ! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

War in  
heaven.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man *child*. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent

Wrath  
of the  
Dragon.

**Chap. 12** cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

**The First  
Monster.**

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is* like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty *and* two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell

upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

12 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of

The  
Second  
Monster.

**Chap. 13** a man; and his number *is* Six hundred three-score *and* six.

**The Lamb and his armies.**

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the 14  
 mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and*  
 four thousand, having his Father's name written  
 in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from 2  
 heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the  
 voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of  
 harpers harping with their harps: and they sung 3  
 as it were a new song before the throne, and  
 before the four beasts, and the elders: and no  
 man could learn that song but the hundred *and*  
 forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed 4  
 from the earth. These are they which were not  
 defiled with women; for they are virgins. These  
 are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he  
 goeth. These were redeemed from among men,  
*being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.  
 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they 5  
 are without fault before the throne of God.

**Proclamation of salvation and judgment.**

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of 6  
 heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach  
 unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every  
 nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,  
 saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory 7  
 to him; for the hour of his judgment is come:  
 and worship him that made heaven, and earth,  
 and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And 8  
 there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is  
 fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made  
 all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her  
 fornication. And the third angel followed them, 9  
 saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the

beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his  
10 forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of  
the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out  
without mixture into the cup of his indignation;  
and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone  
in the presence of the holy angels, and in the  
11 presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their  
torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they  
have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast  
and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark  
12 of his name. Here is the patience of the saints:  
here *are* they that keep the commandments of  
13 God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice  
from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are*  
the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth:  
Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their  
14 labours; and their works do follow them. And  
I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the  
cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on  
his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp  
15 sickle. And another angel came out of the  
temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat  
on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for  
the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest  
of the earth is ripe.

16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle  
17 on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And  
another angel came out of the temple which is in  
18 heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And  
another angel came out from the altar, which had  
power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to  
him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in  
thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the

The Son  
of God in  
power.

**Chap. 14** vine of the earth ; for her grapes are fully ripe.  
 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, 19  
 and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it*  
 into the great winepress of the wrath of God.  
 And the winepress was trodden without the city, 20  
 and blood came out of the winepress, even unto  
 the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and*  
 six hundred furlongs.

**Prepara-** And I saw another sign in heaven, great and 15  
**tion for the** marvellous, seven angels having the seven last  
**Bowls,** plagues ; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.  
 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with 2  
 fire : and them that had gotten the victory over  
 the beast, and over his image, and over his mark,  
*and* over the number of his name, stand on the 3  
 sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they  
 sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and 3  
 the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and mar-  
 vellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just 4  
 and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints. Who  
 shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name ?  
 for *thou* only *art* holy : for all nations shall come  
 and worship before thee ; for thy judgments are  
 made manifest. And after that I looked, and, 5  
 behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testi- 6  
 mony in heaven was opened : and the seven  
 angels came out of the temple, having the seven  
 plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and  
 having their breasts girded with golden girdles.  
 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven 7  
 angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God,  
 who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple 8  
 was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and

from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled. Chap. 15

- 16 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. Pouring  
of the  
Bowls.
- 17 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image. And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.
- 18 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of

**Chap. 16** their deeds. And the sixth angel poured out his 12  
 vial upon the great river Euphrates ; and the water  
 thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of  
 the east might be prepared. And I saw three 13  
 unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of  
 the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast,  
 and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For 14  
 they are the spirits of devils, working miracles,  
*which* go forth unto the kings of the earth  
 and of the whole world, to gather them to the  
 battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, 15  
 I come as a thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth,  
 and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked,  
 and they see his shame. And he gathered them 16  
 together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue  
 Armageddon. And the seventh angel poured out 17  
 his vial into the air ; and there came a great voice  
 out of the temple of heaven, from the throne,  
 saying, It is done. And there were voices, and 18  
 thunders, and lightnings ; and there was a great  
 earthquake, such as was not since men were upon  
 the earth, so mighty an earthquake, *and* so great.  
 And the great city was divided into three parts, 19  
 and the cities of the nations fell : and great Babylon  
 came in remembrance before God, to give unto  
 her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of  
 his wrath. And every island fled away, and the 20  
 mountains were not found. And there fell upon 21  
 men a great hail out of heaven, *every stone* about  
 the weight of a talent : and men blasphemed God  
 because of the plague of the hail ; for the plague  
 thereof was exceeding great.

The  
 Seventh  
 Bowl.

And there came one of the seven angels which 17

- had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.
- And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.
- And here *is* the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the

Chap. 17

Babylon  
the great  
harlot.Meaning  
of the  
vision:  
Babylon  
is Rome.

**Chap. 17** woman sitteth. And there are seven kings : five 10  
 are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not yet  
 come ; and when he cometh, he must continue a  
 short space. And the beast that was, and is not, 11  
 even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and  
 goeth into perdition. And the ten horns which 12  
 thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no  
 kingdom as yet ; but receive power as kings one  
 hour with the beast. These have one mind, and 13  
 shall give their power and strength unto the beast.  
 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the 14  
 Lamb shall overcome them : for he is Lord of  
 lords, and King of kings : and they that are with  
 him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful. And 15  
 he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest,  
 where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multi-  
 tudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten 16  
 horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these  
 shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate  
 and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her  
 with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to 17  
 fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom  
 unto the beast, until the words of God shall be  
 fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is 18  
 that great city, which reigneth over the kings of  
 the earth.

**Triumph-  
 song over  
 Babylon.**

And after these things I saw another angel 19  
 come down from heaven, having great power ; and  
 the earth was lightened with his glory. And he 2  
 cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon  
 the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the  
 habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul  
 spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful

3 bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of  
the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the  
earth have committed fornication with her, and  
the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through  
4 the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard  
another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of  
her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her  
5 sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For  
her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath  
6 remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as  
she rewarded you, and double unto her double  
according to her works: in the cup which she  
7 hath filled fill to her double. How much she  
hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so  
much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith  
in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and  
8 shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues  
come in one day, death, and mourning, and  
famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire:  
9 for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And  
the kings of the earth, who have committed forni-  
cation and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail  
her, and lament for her, when they shall see the  
10 smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the  
fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great  
city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is  
11 thy judgment come. And the merchants of the  
earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man  
12 buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchan-  
dise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and  
of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and  
scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels  
of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious

**Chap. 18** wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and 13  
cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frank-  
incense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and  
wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and  
chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the 14  
fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from  
thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly  
are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them  
no more at all. The merchants of these things, 15  
which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off  
for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,  
and saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was 16  
clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and  
decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!  
For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. 17  
And every shipmaster, and all the company in  
ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea,  
stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke 18  
of her burning, saying, What *city is* like unto this  
great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and 19  
cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that  
great city, wherein were made rich all that had  
ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in  
one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, 20  
*thou* heaven, and *ye* holy apostles and prophets;  
for God hath avenged you on her. And a mighty 21  
angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and  
cast *it* into the sea, saying, Thus with violence  
shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and  
shall be found no more at all. And the voice of 22  
harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trump-  
eters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and  
no craftsman, of whatsoever craft *he be*, shall be

found any more in thee ; and the sound of a mill-  
 23 stone shall be heard no more at all in thee ; and  
 the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in  
 thee ; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the  
 bride shall be heard no more at all in thee : for  
 thy merchants were the great men of the earth ;  
 24 for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And  
 in her was found the blood of prophets, and of  
 saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

19 And after these things I heard a great voice of  
 much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia ; Salva-  
 tion, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the  
 2 Lord our God : for true and righteous *are* his  
 judgments : for he hath judged the great whore,  
 which did corrupt the earth with her fornication,  
 and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her  
 3 hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her  
 4 smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four  
 and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down  
 and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying,  
 5 Amen ; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the  
 throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants,  
 6 and ye that fear him, both small and great. And  
 I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude,  
 and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice  
 of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia : for the  
 7 Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad  
 and rejoice, and give honour to him : for the  
 marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath  
 8 made herself ready. And to her was granted that  
 she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and  
 white : for the fine linen is the righteousness of  
 9 saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are*

Praises of  
 heaven :  
 approach  
 of the  
 Bride.

**Chap. 19** they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See *thou do it* not : I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus : worship God : for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. 10

The re-  
turning  
Christ.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse ; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns ; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood : and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations : and he shall rule them with a rod of iron : and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. 11 12 13 14 15 16

Destruc-  
tion of the  
Beast.

And I saw an angel standing in the sun ; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God ; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all *men*, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the 17 18 19

kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the  
 20 horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.  
 21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

20 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great  
 2 chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and  
 3 Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little  
 4 season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and  
 5 reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.  
 6 Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no

Binding  
of Satan.First  
resurrection.

- Chap. 20** power, but they shall be priests of God and of  
 Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.
- Final conflict.** And when the thousand years are expired, Satan 7  
 shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out 8  
 to deceive the nations which are in the four quar-  
 ters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them  
 together to battle : the number of whom *is* as the  
 sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth 9  
 of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints  
 about, and the beloved city : and fire came down  
 from God out of heaven, and devoured them.  
 And the devil that deceived them was cast into 10  
 the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast  
 and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented  
 day and night for ever and ever.
- Final resurrection and judgment.** And I saw a great white throne, and him that 11  
 sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven  
 fled away ; and there was found no place for them.  
 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before 12  
 God ; and the books were opened : and another  
 book was opened, which is *the book* of life : and  
 the dead were judged out of those things which  
 were written in the books, according to their  
 works. And the sea gave up the dead which were 13  
 in it ; and death and hell delivered up the dead  
 which were in them : and they were judged every  
 man according to their works. And death and 14  
 hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the  
 second death. And whosoever was not found 15  
 written in the book of life was cast into the lake  
 of fire.
- The New Jeru-  
salem.** And I saw a new heaven and a new earth : for 21  
 the first heaven and the first earth were passed

2 away; and there was no more sea. And I John  
saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down  
from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride  
3 adorned for her husband. And I heard a great  
voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle  
of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them,  
and they shall be his people, and God himself  
4 shall be with them, *and be* their God. And God  
shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and  
there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor  
crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for  
5 the former things are passed away. And he that  
sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all  
things new. And he said unto me, Write: for  
6 these words are true and faithful. And he said  
unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega,  
the beginning and the end. I will give unto him  
that is athirst of the fountain of the water of  
7 life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all  
things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my  
8 son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the  
abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers,  
and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall  
have their part in the lake which burneth with fire  
and brimstone: which is the second death.

9 And there came unto me one of the seven  
angels which had the seven vials full of the seven  
last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come  
hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's  
10 wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to  
a great and high mountain, and shewed me that  
great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of  
11 heaven from God, having the glory of God: and

Description  
of the  
City.

**Chap. 21** her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even  
like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a 12  
wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at  
the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon,  
which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the  
children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the 13  
north three gates; on the south three gates; and  
on the west three gates. And the wall of the city 14  
had twelve foundations, and in them the names of  
the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that 15  
talked with me had a golden reed to measure the  
city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 16  
And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as  
large as the breadth: and he measured the city  
with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The  
length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. 17  
And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred *and*  
forty *and* four cubits, *according to* the measure of  
a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of 18  
the wall of it was *of* jasper: and the city *was* pure  
gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations 19  
of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all  
manner of precious stones. The first foundation  
*was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a  
chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, 20  
sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chryso-  
lyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the  
tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth;  
the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates 21  
*were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one  
pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold,  
as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple 22  
therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the

23 Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the  
 24 Lamb *is* the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and  
 25 honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night  
 26 there. And they shall bring the glory and honour  
 27 of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

22 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of  
 2 God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of  
 3 the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his  
 4 servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.  
 5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

6 And he said unto me, These sayings *are* faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things  
 7 which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of

River of water of life.

Conclusion, warnings, and assurances.

**Chap. 22** the prophecy of this book. And I John saw these 8  
 things, and heard *them*. And when I had heard  
 and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of  
 the angel which shewed me these things. Then 9  
 saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am thy  
 fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets,  
 and of them which keep the sayings of this book:  
 worship God. And he saith unto me, Seal not 10  
 the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the  
 time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him 11  
 be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be  
 filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be  
 righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy  
 still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my re- 12  
 ward *is* with me, to give every man according as  
 his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the 13  
 beginning and the end, the first and the last.  
 Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that 14  
 they may have right to the tree of life, and may  
 enter in through the gates into the city. For 15  
 without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremon-  
 gers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever  
 loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine 16  
 angel to testify unto you these things in the  
 churches. I am the root and the offspring of  
 David, *and* the bright and morning star. And the 17  
 Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him  
 that heareth say, Come. And let him that is  
 athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take  
 the water of life freely.

**Epilogue  
 and bene-  
 diction.**

For I testify unto every man that heareth the 18  
 words of the prophecy of this book, If any man  
 shall add unto these things, God shall add unto

him the plagues that are written in this book : **Chap. 22**  
19 and if any man shall take away from the words of  
the book of this prophecy, God shall take away  
his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy  
city, and *from* the things which are written in this  
20 book. He which testifieth these things saith,  
Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come,  
21 Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ  
*be* with you all. Amen.

THE REVELATION

OF

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

REVISED VERSION WITH ANNOTATIONS

# THE REVELATION

OF

## ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him I

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**THE TITLE.** 'The Revelation of St. John the Divine.' The shortest and probably the earliest form of the title of the book is 'Apocalypse of John,' or, using the Latin equivalent of the word 'Apocalypse,' 'Revelation of John.' On the meaning of the title see Introduction, p. 13, and on the authorship see Introduction, p. 34. The description of the author as 'the Divine,' which appears in our English version, is a title given to the Apostle not earlier than the fourth century. It refers not to his character, but to attainments, as when we speak of 'the great Divines of the English Church,' 'John the Theologian.'

i. 1-3. The superscription, indicating the source, the contents, and the importance of the book. The source of the revelation is God speaking through His Son, who exhibits to His servants the things that are to be, through the double agency of 'His angel' and 'His servant' John. The contents of the book are 'the word of God' and 'the testimony of Jesus Christ' (cf. i. 9), to which the writer bears witness. Its importance is indicated by the solemn blessing pronounced upon him who reads it in public, upon those who hear it read, and upon those who obey its monitions. Observe the division into three parts, each of which breaks up again into three ideas—a characteristic feature of the Johannine literature.

**1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ:** that is, the revelation which proceeds from him. For the thought, characteristic of John, that the Son receives of the Father in order to give unto men, cf. the Gospel of John iii. 32, v. 20, viii. 28, xii. 49 (commandment), xiv. 10; and especially vii. 16, 'My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me.' See Bernard, *Progress of Doctrine*, p. 51.

to shew unto his servants, *even* the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified *it* by his <sup>2</sup> angel unto his servant John; who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, *even* <sup>3</sup> of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

**which must:** according to the Divine ordering of events; cf. Luke xxiv. 26.

**shortly come to pass.** For the whole phrase cf. Dan. ii. 28 and 29. It is not merely the beginning of 'these things' that is anticipated 'shortly,' but their completion. The phrase rendered 'shortly' contains both ideas of 'soon' and 'swiftly'; cf. Deut. ix. 3; Acts xii. 7; Rom. xvi. 20, and especially Luke xviii. 8, where the same phrase is used. The expectation that the final end was close at hand, and that it would come, not through development, but through crises of judgement, was part of the common consciousness of the primitive church. That it has been disappointed is due to the double fact which was long overlooked—the slowness, as men count slowness, of His working, with whom 'a thousand years are as one day,' and the intervention of many anticipatory 'ends' or 'judgements' before the final one. Each of these anticipatory ends or crises prepares for, and confirms the certainty of, the final one.

**his angel:** probably the same who is again referred to in xxii. 16, but not to be identified with any other angel mentioned in the book. It has been suggested that this superscription was not written until the book was finished, in which case John would have in his mind the angel of the last chapter. In any case it is our Lord himself who opens the apocalyptic vision and calls his servant to behold it.

**2. R. V. by substituting *even* for 'and'** indicates that the 'word' and the 'witness' were the things which 'he saw'; cf. i. 9, xii. 17, xx. 4. The 'testimony of Jesus' is not the testimony concerning Jesus, but the truth to which Jesus testifies, which becomes in turn the burden of his servant's testimony; cf. vi. 9, xii. 17, xix. 10.

**3. he that readeth.** That is the Reader. It was already a common practice in the church to depute one of its members to read apostolic writings aloud in the hearing of the congregation. If this was not yet an office, it was on the way to become one.

The verse (cf. xxii. 7, 10) plainly shews that the writer claims for himself and his work the character and authority of prophecy

JOHN to the seven churches which are in Asia : Grace 4  
to you and peace, from him which is and which was and

(in distinction from the earlier apocalypses), and also the purpose of exhortation. What he wrote contained an oft-repeated summons to endurance, patience, and loyalty to Christ. The words translated 'keep,' 'testimony,' and 'bear witness' are characteristic of the Johannine diction.

i. 4-8. *The address or salutation.* This is introductory to the whole book. It is directed to the Seven Churches collectively; and they, here as elsewhere, are to be taken as representative of the whole church in its ideal unity which is unaffected by individual differences. The apostolic salutation invokes grace and peace from the Triune God, then proceeds to an exalted ascription of praise to the Redeemer, and concludes with a solemn reminder of the event upon which all Christian expectation was focussed, the return of Christ to judge the world; and this passes over into a proclamation in the name of God Himself of His own eternal power and glory.

4. *John.* This common letter addressed to the collective church opens with a salutation similar to that which is used in other apostolic Epistles (cf. 1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1), but without the emphasis on the apostleship of the writer which is found in most of them (e. g. Rom. i. 1; 1 Pet. i. 1).

*the seven churches:* i. e. those about to be mentioned (verse 11), the same to which the Seven Letters are separately addressed. But there is a special significance in the choice of this exact number. Seven representing completeness, these churches are addressed both individually and as representative of the whole church.

*Asia* here, as elsewhere in the N. T., refers of course not to what we now know as Asia Minor, still less to the continent of Asia, but to the Roman 'Province' which bore the name. It included those portions of Asia Minor otherwise known as Mysia, Caria, Lydia, and (part of) Phrygia.

*from him which is and which was and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ.* The 'grace and peace' which are invoked are traced to a threefold source in which it is hardly possible not to see an allusion to the three Persons of the Godhead, although they are arranged in an unwonted order, and the manner of describing the Holy Spirit is unusual. The Greek form of the first three clauses, which is here startling in its disregard of grammatical rules, shews probably that the writer was making use of a solemn and stereotyped phrase to describe the Creator; cf. i. 8, iv. 8. It is based doubtless on the great declaration of the name of

which is to come ; and from the seven Spirits which are  
 5 before his throne ; and from Jesus Christ, *who is* the  
 faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler

Jehovah in Exod. iii. 14, and moulded in part by the Septuagint translation of that passage, in part by the paraphrases and commentaries of the Rabbis. But the transforming influence of the revelation of Jesus Christ is seen in the striking substitution of 'which is to come' for the phrase 'which shall be,' with which the traditional description of Jehovah probably concluded. The Targums had paraphrased the words in Exodus : 'who was and who is and who shall be.' 'It is the Son, as the manifestation of the Godhead, who is mainly in the Apostle's mind' (Milligan), and his paraphrase is coloured by that aspect of the Godhead which is presented in the Incarnation ; cf. Matt. xi. 3 ; Heb. x. 37.

**the seven Spirits which are before his throne.** If, as seems probable, this is to be understood as a reference to the Holy Spirit, the form must be regarded 'as expressing his plenitude and perfection' (Alford). 'The seven Spirits betoken the completeness and universality of the working of God's Holy Spirit.' The Spirit in the sevenfold completeness of his operation is similarly referred to in iv. 5 ('seven lamps of fire') and in v. 6 ('seven eyes' of the Lamb). The source of the conception has been commonly traced to the well-known passage in Isa. xi. 2. But the energies of the Spirit as there enumerated are strictly not seven, but six. The origin of this conception, which the writer evidently assumes as familiar to the minds of his readers, may be found rather in a combination of the idea in Ps. civ. 4 ('who maketh his angels spirits,' A. V.) with the later Jewish idea that the number of the chief angels was seven. Cf. Tobit xii. 15, 'I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels' (A. V.). This last idea is by Gunkel and others traced in its turn to the old Babylonian speculation according to which the sun, moon, and five planets were controlled by seven spirits. Evidence of the influence of such speculations is found in the later Jewish literature ; e. g. in the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch* (xix. 1 ff.) 'And these classes of angels govern the movements of the stars and the changes of the moon and the movements of the sun. These are the archangels who are set over the angels' (Bousset).

**5. and from Jesus Christ.** The writer puts last that person of whose activity and grace he is about to speak.

**the faithful witness:** cf. iii. 14 ; John xviii. 37, 'to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.'

**the firstborn of the dead** (so Col. i. 18 ; cf. also 1 Cor. xv. 20), **and the ruler of the kings of the earth.** There is

of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us **6** to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father;

a striking parallel to the double idea in Ps. lxxxix. 27, 'I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth' (A. V.). See also Isa. lv. 4, where the two ideas of the Messiah as witness and as ruler are combined.

**Unto him that loveth us.** Corrected by R. V. from 'loved.' Christ's love to his people is continuous, while his redeeming work is completed once for all. The contemplation of his glory as Messiah leads to this great doxology addressed to him as the Saviour and Redeemer of his people. Both the transition and the combination are remarkable. It is a transcription of the writer's experience as a Jew who had become a Christian. The first half of the verse represents the Jewish expectation of the Messiah at its highest. The second half shews this carried over into Christianity, but both fulfilled and transcended through the sacrifice of Christ. The true relation between Judaism and Christianity is here exhibited. And to seize the combination as it lay in the writer's mind is to have the key to much that is perplexing in his book. Intellectually to a large extent still a Jew, he is spiritually and ethically a true disciple of Christ, and possessed of his Spirit. He still clings to all that is valuable in the O. T., and to much besides that was commonly believed in his circle of Judaism; but that which is specifically Christian is at the same time held by him with a glow of conviction and a passionate gladness which make themselves felt in a passage such as this.

**and loosed us from our sins by his blood.** The insertion or the omission of a single letter makes the difference between the A. V. 'washed' and the R. V. 'loosed.' The manuscript evidence for each is very evenly balanced; the other evidence likewise. On the whole, the old reading, 'washed,' seems more in harmony with the thought of this book and with the Johannine diction in general. For the latter compare especially John xiii. 10; 1 John i. 7; also 1 Cor. vi. 11; Rev. vi. 14.

**6. and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father.** The thought has its rise in Exod. xix. 6, 'Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation,' and is found again in 1 Pet. ii. 9, where the LXX rendering of the verse in Exodus is followed. According to the form it takes here Christ's people not only have a kingdom, but are a kingdom, i. e. an organized society, realizing the will of a Divine King. As individuals they have a priestly privilege and duty, access even into the Holy of Holies 'by the blood of Jesus,' to offer

- to him *be* the glory and the dominion for ever and ever.  
 7 Amen. Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.
- 8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty.

'spiritual sacrifices' of prayer and praise and a surrendered life, and to make prevailing intercession for other men.

**his God and Father.** Cf. John xx. 17. 'In his perfect humanity Christ speaks of the Father as his God: Matt. xxvii. 46. Cf. Rev. iii. 2, 12' (Westcott).

Similar doxologies addressed to Christ are found in Rom. xvi. 27; 2 Tim. iv. 18; Heb. xiii. 21; 1 Pet. iv. 11.

**7. he cometh with the clouds.** From Dan. vii. 13, as quoted in Mark xiv. 62. 'The motto of the book: He comes! With great impressiveness it is put into the mouth of God Himself' (Bousset). Cf. xiv. 14.

The rest of the verse is adapted from Zech. xii. 10, but the influence of the quotation of the same passage in Matt. xxiv. 30 is evident in the common divergence of both from the LXX in the word translated 'see,' and in the application as a warning of what in the original context is a gracious anticipation. 'They shall look on him whom they pierced' is quoted also in John xix. 37; and here also the Gospel and the Apocalypse shew a common divergence from the LXX translation. They both render correctly the word 'pierced,' the force of which is missed by the LXX. We have here, therefore, a point in favour of the common authorship.

**mourn over him:** *lit.* 'mourn at him,' i. e. 'their mourning shall be directed towards him as its object' (Alford). 'There will then be two kinds of mourning, the one due to the terror of an enemy, the other to the terror of the penitent' (Bengel).

**8. I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God.** The reading of R. V. makes plain what in A. V. might be doubtful, viz. that it is God the Lord who speaks. Cf. Isa. xlv. 6, 'Thus saith the Lord . . . the Lord of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last'; also xlvi. 12. The same description is applied to Him 'that sat upon the throne,' in Rev. xxi. 6; but to Christ in i. 17 and xxii. 13.

**the Almighty.** The word so translated is that which the LXX uses to render 'Lord of Hosts.' So in Amos iii. 13, iv. 13-

I John, your brother and partaker with you in the 9 tribulation and kingdom and patience *which are* in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God

It is used nine times in this book, and always of God; and in one other passage in the N.T., 2 Cor. vi. 18.

i. 9-20. *The vision of the Son of Man.* The vision now to be described is intended specially as an introduction to the Seven Epistles. The description touches on the Seer and the circumstances in which the vision came to him (verses 9, 10<sup>a</sup>), the voice commanding to write (verses 10<sup>b</sup>, 11), the appearance of the Son of Man (verses 12-16), and the command to write repeated with gracious encouragements (verses 17-20).

**I John.** The naming of himself by the writer (cf. xxii. 8) marks a sense of personal authority and also of personal relationship to the readers which is further expressed in the next clause.

**your brother.** This is variously taken as precluding the apostolic authorship or as confirming it, a continuation of the self-effacement characteristic of the author of the Fourth Gospel.

**and partaker with you:** *lit.* 'fellow-partaker'; as Paul was of God's grace (Phil. i. 7) or of the gospel (1 Cor. ix. 23), so John was of the mingled experience described as 'the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus.' Cf. 2 Thess. iii. 5. The threefold description presents the Christian life as the young church had found it to be, but also as the Master had predicted that it would be. It might have been built up out of his sayings: 'In the world ye shall have tribulation'; 'It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom'; 'In your patience ye shall win your souls.' The fact that it has not been so built up, and yet so closely corresponds to his teaching, shews how really his disciples were enabled to read off their experience, how they were inspired by his Spirit to look at life from their Master's point of view. Patience is the ethical keynote of this book, the purpose of which is to harmonize the experience of tribulation with the conviction of God's kingdom proclaimed by Jesus and accepted by his disciples.

'Following the clue thus afforded me, I seek and hope to find patience in this book of awful import. Patience at the least: and along with that grace whatever treasures God may vouchsafe me. Now if any deign to seek patience in my company, I pray them to remember that One high above me in the Kingdom of Heaven heads our pilgrim caravan' (C. Rossetti).

**was** (more exactly, 'came to be') **in the isle that is called Patmos.** Patmos is a small rocky island, about ten miles long by six wide, lying off the SW. coast of Asia Minor, to the west of

10 and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the  
 Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a  
 11 trumpet saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and

Miletus, and about fifteen miles from Ephesus. According to an ancient tradition, offenders of rank were banished thither to work in the mines or marble quarries.

The form into which the sentence is cast suggests that the Seer was no longer in Patmos when he wrote down the record of his visions. That being so, it is at least improbable that the whole of what follows was heard and seen in the vision. Rather has he reproduced and developed what was given to him in germ through the vision on Patmos. 'And this by no means reduces the prophetic value of the Apocalypse, since the prophetic spirit, by which he was inspired, was by no means confined in its operation to the moments of the visions' (Weiss).

**for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.** This may be taken either as explaining the cause of John's being in Patmos, viz. that he had been banished thither because of his faithful witnessing to Christ, or as describing the purpose to which his sojourn there was subservient, viz. that he might receive the revelation of the word and testimony. The tone of the context supports the former; the meaning of the parallel phrase in verse 2 suggests the latter. But the meaning given to the same preposition in vi. 9 and xx. 4, together with the early tradition that the writer was sent as an exile to the island, makes the former the more probable.

**10. I was** (*lit.* 'came to be') **in the Spirit**; that is, in a prophetic ecstasy or trance. Cf. iv. 2, xxi. 10. The reverse process is described in Acts xii. 11, where the literal meaning is, 'when he came to be in himself.'

**on the Lord's day.** The observance of the first day of the week as a Christian festival is to be traced in Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2. The earliest use of the name, however, is in this passage. It occurs shortly afterwards in the *Didache*, and in the writings of Ignatius, who describes true Christians as those who no longer 'sabbatize,' but live 'according to the Lord's day.'

**I heard behind me a great voice** (*lit.* 'I heard behind me a voice great'), **as of a trumpet.** Cf. Ezek. iii. 12, 'Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing' (A. V.). The voice had trumpet-qualities of loudness and clearness. It is not indicated who was the speaker, but it seems most natural to suppose that the voice comes from the figure which John turns to see.

**11.** The clause omitted by R. V. has crept in here from the parallel passages in i. 8, 17.

send *it* to the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice which spake with me. <sup>12</sup> And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son <sup>13</sup> of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And his <sup>14</sup> head and his hair were white as white wool, *white* as

**the seven churches.** The names are given in the order in which the towns would be visited by a traveller who started from Ephesus (probably the writer's home) and went north as far as Pergamum, then turned inland to Thyatira, and thence south to Laodicea. Concerning the several churches see below, chapters ii and iii.

**12. seven golden candlesticks:** or lamp-stands. The imagery is doubtless connected with the seven-branched candlestick of the tabernacle (Exod. xxv. 31) which had already figured in the vision of Zechariah (iv. 2). But the vision here is of seven separate stands each bearing a torch or lamp. Cf. the ten 'candlesticks' in Solomon's temple, 1 Kings vii. 49. Though thus disjoined from one another so that the figure of the Son of man is seen moving amongst them, the seven represent the church in its spiritual oneness, which remains even though one or others of its parts should require to be moved (ii. 5).

**13. one like unto a son of man:** this is the correct rendering, and shews that the phrase is connected in the first instance with Dan. vii. 13 rather than with the phraseology of the gospels. None the less, the figure which John saw was the figure of Christ. See xiv. 14, and note.

**a garment down to the foot:** this indicates an official vesture, a 'robe,' becoming a person of high dignity. The dignity suggested may be royal or priestly, or both. Cf. Exod. xxviii. 4, 31 (LXX, 27), where the same adjective is used of Aaron's 'robe' in the Greek.

**a golden girdle:** cf. Dan. x. 5. According to 1 Macc. x. 19 a golden girdle is part of the vesture of a king, but the position here assigned to it is characteristic of the girdle of the priest.

**14. his head and his hair were white:** this description is taken from the passage in Daniel where the prophet describes the vision of the Ancient of Days (vii. 9). The connexion of the two passages is very significant of the dignity assigned by the

- 15 snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters.
- 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.
- 17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not;

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writer of the Apocalypse to Christ; here again he describes his appearance in terms which for the Jewish mind were associated by sacred tradition with the vision of the Almighty. Cf. i. 18, ii. 8, xxii. 12, 13 and notes.

**15. burnished brass** (cf. Ezek. i. 7; Dan. x. 6). The metal referred to probably corresponds to our 'bronze,' a mixture of copper and tin: the comparison is suggested by the brilliancy of the alloy when polished.

**his voice as the voice of many waters:** in Ezek. i. 24 the noise of wings 'like the noise of great waters' is also 'as the voice of the Almighty'; cf. also Ezek. xliii. 2, and Rev. xiv. 2.

**16. seven stars:** in the image before the eye of the Seer these probably appear as a chain of glittering jewels, hanging from the hand of Christ.

**a ... two-edged sword:** cf. ii. 12, 16, xix. 15. A comparison with Heb. iv. 12, 'the word of God... sharper than any two-edged sword,' and 2 Thess. ii. 8, 'whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth,' suggests that the sword here referred to is the Word of the Spirit. The destroying power of the Word is also alluded to in the *Psalms of Solomon* xvii, where there is found a prayer that Messiah may 'destroy the heathen with the word of his mouth.'

**as the sun shineth in his strength:** i. e. when unclouded. So Judges v. 31, where the song of Deborah closes with the prayer that those that love Jehovah may be as the sun goeth forth in his might. Cf. also Matt. xvii. 2.

**17.** The whole impression is one of overwhelming glory and power; and like Daniel (viii. 17, x. 9) and Ezekiel (i. 28) the Seer prostrates himself before the vision, only to receive again like Daniel (viii. 18, x. 10, 16) a gracious and uplifting touch. The action is one characteristic of Jesus, as are the words that follow, **Fear not.** The action and the words are found combined in the account of the Transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 6, 7) with which this whole passage has much in common.

**I am the first and the last.** It is very remarkable that the

I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I <sup>18</sup> was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Write therefore <sup>19</sup> the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter; the <sup>20</sup>

writer ascribes to Christ as a description of himself the very phrase which has previously (i. 8), and frequently in the O. T., been applied to the Almighty (cf. xxii. 13). It is a testimony all the more striking, because indirect, to the completeness of his acceptance of Christ as Divine.

**and the Living one.** The grouping of the words as well as the translation is slightly altered in the R. V. This further attribute is also an attribute of the Most High. It was as the 'living God' that Jehovah made Himself known to His people, as the 'living God' that the Psalmist longed after Him (Ps. xlii. 2), as 'the Son of the living God' that Peter hailed Jesus (Matt. xvi. 16).

These verses reflect the Johannine conception of Christ in the three stages of the 'glory' which he had with the Father before the world was, his humiliation culminating in his death, and the power and glory into which after death he passed.

**18. the keys of death and of Hades.** There is no distinction to be drawn between these two words; they both combine in one idea the underworld of the dead. Death is spoken of as a locality with 'gates' in Job xxxviii. 17; Ps. ix. 14; Hades also in Isa. xxxviii. 10; Matt. xvi. 16. It was part of the teaching of the Rabbinic schools that the key of death was one of four (the keys of life, the grave, food, and rain) which were in the hand of God alone.

**19. therefore.** The fact of Christ's authority re-asserted after his incarnation and death is the ground of the commission now given to his servant to proclaim the contents of his vision. The connexion of ideas is the same as in Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.

**which thou sawest:** the vision. **which are:** the situation of the church to be described in the Seven Letters. **which shall come to pass:** the crises of judgement which the writer is to proclaim.

**20. the mystery:** understand 'as touching the mystery.' Both the language and the didactic method recall our Lord's way of instructing his disciples; cf. Matt. xiii. 11, 18.

The sense of the word 'mystery' needs to be carefully observed. It is not used in the Bible in the modern sense of 'something that cannot be fathomed or understood,' but on the contrary it indicates, either something which is waiting to be revealed, or that which

mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven

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when explained conveys understanding. In the latter sense it comes near to our word 'symbol.' And this is the sense in which it is to be taken here and in xvii. 7. The fact that here and elsewhere the word was rendered by *sacramentum* in the Latin Vulgate has had strange and unintended results in Latin theology.

**angels of the seven churches.** To the question, What or who is represented by these 'angels'? many answers have been given; of these only two are important. On the one hand, it has been thought that the 'angel' of a church stands for that church's human representatives, its rulers, teachers or presbyters; and as only one is specified, the 'angel' is supposed to refer specifically to the bishop of the church. Against this have to be set the facts that (1) the word 'angel' is never used in the N. T. of a human being, except in two passages where it stands simply for 'messenger'; (2) it is very unlikely that, at the date when the Apocalypse was written, the development from a plurality of presbyter-bishops in each congregation to a single monarchical bishop had taken place in Asia Minor. There was probably, therefore, up to this time no single individual who could properly be addressed as representing the local church, and (3) in the Letters themselves the 'angel' is identified with his church as partaker of its character and its destiny to a degree beyond what could be ascribed to any human ruler. The other interpretation is therefore to be preferred, that, namely, which sees in the angel of each church a personification of its spirit or an ideal representative of its personality. Confirmation of this view is found in the Jewish doctrine of 'guardian angels,' which have influence over and responsibility for nations, communities, or individuals. This idea appears clearly for the first time in Dan. x. 13, 20, though it possibly underlies also such a passage as Isa. xxiv. 21, 22, where 'the universal wickedness of the world appears laid at the door of its rulers, whether angelic or human, and the judgement of God falls on "the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of earth upon the earth"' (Davidson). The idea was further developed in the Apocrypha, and is referred to in the N. T. (Matt. xviii. 10; Acts xii. 15).

The true idea seems to be that the 'angels' of the churches are a symbolical representation in which the active, as distinguished from the passive, life of the church finds expression. To John every person, every thing, has its angel; God proclaims and executes His will by angels (Rev. vii. 2, xiv. 6, 8, 9). 'The waters have an angel' (xvi. 5). 'Fire has an angel' (xiv. 18). 'The winds have an angel' (vii. 1). 'The abyss has an angel' (ix. 11). In like

stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.

manner the 'angels of the churches' are the churches themselves, with this mark of distinction only, that, when they are thus spoken of, they are viewed not merely as in possession of inward vigour, but as exercising it towards things without. (Milligan, in *Expositor's Bible*; see also Lightfoot on *Philippians*, p. 199 f.)

ii. 1—iii. 22. THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

In order to secure a full understanding of these Letters, it is necessary to look at each of them in a double aspect, first, as addressed to an individual, historical church, and reflecting the character and situation of the church to which it is addressed, and secondly, as directed to these churches in a representative capacity, and together standing for the whole church, and reflecting the strength and weakness, the victories and shortcomings, which characterize the church of Christ wherever it may be found. The former aspect is evident in the graphic delineation and differentiation of each particular church, and in the close correspondence of its features to what is otherwise known to have been its character. The latter is to be inferred from the following considerations: (1) It would be inconsistent with the method of the book as a whole, were the number seven not typical of a larger whole, as well as descriptive of seven individuals. (2) Each Letter opens with a phrase descriptive of Christ the Speaker, which is based on one or other of the features in the description of the Son of man as seen in the vision of i. 13-18. As that whole is thus broken up into parts, so all these parts again combine to form one whole. (3) Each Letter contains an application of its contents not alone to the church which is specifically addressed, but to 'the churches.' We are to find, therefore, at once seven Epistles addressed to seven churches, and one Epistle addressed to the church; individual portraits of seven Christian communities, and one composite portrait of the whole; anticipations of the future of each, but also principles which must govern the fate of all.

The construction of the Epistles deserves attention. They have much in common, and some points of difference. Each Epistle begins with the same command to write to the angel of the church, and with the same phrase, 'These things saith.' Each Epistle proceeds to describe the Speaker under one aspect of his power, then to characterize the church addressed in a clause beginning, 'I know,' then develops that description into an exhortation either to repentance or to steadfastness, and culminates in a promise 'to him that overcometh.' Each Epistle also contains towards the close the solemn warning, 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.'

## 2 To the angel of the church in Ephesus write ;

The only difference in construction is seen in the position given to this warning, which in three cases precedes, but in four follows, the promise. It is possible that this distinction is connected in the mind of the writer with a distinction between two groups of churches, the first three and the last four. There is a difference of tone between these two groups which it is easier to feel than to describe. 'In none of the three (first) cases is the church perfect, but in none is she really faithless to her trust. She is in danger; she needs to be perfected by suffering; by suffering she is perfected: but she knows that he who will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God, and the enemies of God are her enemies' (Milligan). In the second group the churches as a whole seem to have been faithless; it is only a 'remnant' which is acknowledged as faithful. In them the struggle is fiercer, the issue more in doubt, and the promises are fuller and more eloquent of victory for those who endure to the end.

ii. 1-7. *Letter to the church at Ephesus.*1. **To the angel.** See above on i. 20.

**Ephesus.** The capital of the Roman proconsular province of Asia. It was situated at the sea-end of the principal trade-route through Asia Minor between east and west, and was for a long period the greatest commercial centre of the country. Its importance was further enhanced by its possessing the most famous and popular temple of Artemis (see Acts xix. 23 ff.). The word descriptive of the city in Acts xix. 35, which in the A. V. is translated 'worshipper,' in the R. V. 'temple-keeper,' is a technical term, and indeed a title of honour which the town inscribed upon its coins (see Ramsay's art. 'Ephesus' in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*). It has also been inferred from the coinage of Ephesus that it possessed besides a temple of the Emperor, if not two. This great centre both of commercial and religious life was recognized by Paul as a strategic point of the highest importance for his work. Accordingly, he took up his residence there for a longer period than in any other place, preaching for three months in the synagogue, and then for two years using the lecture-room of Tyrannus. To Ephesus also he sent Timothy to carry on the work of evangelization. There too John, the writer of the Apocalypse, had his home for many years, and there he is said to have died. Both Jewish and Gentile elements were strongly represented in the church at Ephesus, and Paul's Epistle to Timothy, as well as the letter of Ignatius, testifies to the danger of schism. The geographical position of the city gave it a peculiar and sad significance in the martyr-experiences of Asian Christians. Many

These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: I know thy works, and thy toil<sup>2</sup> and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and thou hast<sup>3</sup> patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not

of the sufferers by persecution were deported to Rome there to suffer in the Colosseum. Ephesus is the 'sea-end of the road along which most of the criminals sent to Rome from the province of Asia would be led, and at Ephesus they would find ships to take them to Ostia.' To this there is a touching reference in the Letter of Ignatius to the church at Ephesus: 'Ye are a high-road of them that are on their way to die unto God!'

**the seven stars.** See above i. 16. 'This contrast between the heavenly and the earthly fires—the star shining by its own inherent light and the lamp flickering and uncertain, requiring to be fed with fuel and tended with care—cannot be devoid of meaning. The star is the suprasensual counterpart, the heavenly representative; the lamp, the earthly realization, the outward embodiment' (Lightfoot).

**2. thy works** (so in all seven Epistles except those to Smyrna and Pergamum), **and thy toil and patience.** The 'toil and patience' are the works of the church at Ephesus: laborious effort to resist and overcome error, and steadfast endurance in bearing witness for Christ. The same three words are used to describe the character of the church at Thessalonica (1 Thess. i. 3).

The occasion of the toil and the patience which they have been called upon to shew is further explained in the following clauses.

**them which call themselves apostles.** Those who bore, or at least claimed, the name of 'apostles' must have been a considerable number towards the end of the first century, and the scattered Christian communities had to be on their guard against pretenders to the name. In the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (chap. xi) careful directions are given by which such false prophets might be recognized. The determination of this church at Ephesus to detect and avoid these false teachers finds an interesting illustration in the Letter of Ignatius to the same church (chap. ix): 'I have learned that certain persons passed through you from yonder, bringing evil doctrine; whom ye suffered not to sow seed in you, for ye stopped your ears, so that ye might not receive the seed sown by them.'

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ramsay, *Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 318.

4 grown weary. But I have *this* against thee, that thou  
5 didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore from  
whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first  
works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy  
6 candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. But  
this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the

**3. grown weary.** The same word is used of Jesus beside Jacob's Well.

**4. thy first love:** i. e. the love thou hadst at the beginning. Some have thought that the reference is to 'brotherly love' (1 John iv. 14); but in view of the imagery so frequently adopted in the O. T. (Jer. ii. 2, 'the love of thine espousals'; Hos. ii. 14-19; cf. Matt. xxiv. 25), it is more probably to be understood of the love of the people to God, the warm enthusiasm of the church towards Christ (John xxi. 15).

**5. the first works** are those which characterized the first love: their resumption will be the outward and visible sign of the renewal of the old affection. Here, as in the gospels, Christ demands conduct as the fruit and guarantee of love and faith. The verse is full of echoes of the Synoptists; cf. Matt. v. 14-16; Mark iv. 25; also John xiv. 15.

**6. But this thou hast.** 'We may notice the tender compassion of our blessed Lord, who, in his blame of a falling church, yet selects for praise one particular in which his mind is yet retained' (Alford).

**thou hatest.** Cf. Browning's description of *Dante*—

'who loved well because he hated,

Hated wickedness that hinders loving.'

**the works of the Nicolaitans.** The false apostles who have been mentioned in verse 2 are now named, as they are named again and more fully described in the Letter to the church at Pergamum. Of the history and tenets of this sect nothing certain is known. There is an early conjecture which assigns its origin to Nicolas the Deacon (Acts vi. 5). It is probable, from the comparison between them and Balaam in verses 14, 15, that they were an Antinomian sect who carried to licentious extremes the liberty from the Mosaic Law wherewith Christ had made men free. They 'represent a more advanced and aggressive stage of Antinomianism than that which was found in the Corinthian church. They are organized into a sect, with a "doctrine," and stand in a nearer relationship to the "false teachers" referred to in Jude 4, 11, 12 and 2 Peter ii. 1, 2, 14, 15, who "turned the grace of God into lasciviousness," "denied even the Master" (probably through countenancing idolatry), and "followed the way of Balaam," "running riotously into error."' (Cowan in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible.*)

Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, <sup>7</sup> let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

**7. He that hath an ear.** This formula, which recurs in all the seven Letters, refers to the whole contents of the Letter, not merely to the promise, as the punctuation of the A. V. might suggest. It involves John's claim to speak as a prophet (cf. i. 3), commissioned by the Spirit, and also the expansion of the scope of the message to each church, first to all the seven, and then to the church at large. For the phrase cf. Matt. xi. 15, xiii. 9, &c., also Ezek. iii. 27.

**To him that overcometh.** A like promise is contained in each of the seven Letters. The verb is used absolutely, without any indication of the foe to be overcome. So in John xvi. 33, 1 John ii. 13, and of Christ himself, Rev. iii. 21. But in the last passage the emphasis is on the victory as completed; in the promises (cf. also xxi. 7), it is on the continuous overcoming, the life of victory. The final victory and its reward are the fruits of innumerable antecedent victories, each of which also receives its reward of the like character with the crowning one.

**will I give to eat:** i. e. give power or opportunity to eat.

**the tree of life,** which once stood in the midst of the Garden of Eden (Gen. ii. 9), is here pictured as standing in the heavenly garden of God. So Enoch in his vision-visit to Paradise finds there the tree of life, and is told: 'No mortal is permitted to touch this tree of delicious fragrance till the great day of judgement; . . . this tree will then be given to the righteous and the humble' (*Enoch* xxiv, xxv); cf. 4 Esra viii. 52, 'For you is Paradise opened, and the tree of life planted.' See also Rev. xx. 2, and note. 'The promise and its expression are in the closest connexion with our Lord's discourse in John vi' (Alford).

**Paradise.** The word, which occurs only three times in the N. T. (Luke xxiii. 43; 2 Cor. xii. 4, and here), is originally a Median or Persian word for 'park' or 'garden.' It is found in this sense in Cant. iv. 13 (R. V. 'orchard'); Eccles. ii. 5 (R. V. 'parks'); Neh. ii. 8 (A. V. 'forest'). But from its being used by the LXX to translate the name of the 'garden' of Eden, it acquired a special application to the 'garden of God' (Ezek. xxxi. 8, 9). 'In the New Testament it is raised to still higher uses. The primæval Eden gives place to a "garden of God," that is, not of earth; the thought of a Paradise of the past is lost in the hope of a Paradise of the future, and the word becomes a name for the scene of rest and recompense for the righteous after death' (S. D. F. Salmond

8 And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write ;

These things saith the first and the last, which was  
 9 dead, and lived *again* : I know thy tribulation, and thy  
 poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them  
 which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a  
 10 synagogue of Satan. Fear not the things which thou art  
 about to suffer : behold, the devil is about to cast some

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in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, where much further information of interest will be found).

ii. 8-11. *Letter to the church at Smyrna.*

**8. to the angel.** The suggestion of ancient commentators that this Letter was addressed to Polycarp, as the bishop of Smyrna, falls to the ground with the theory that the 'angel' stands for a human individual.

**Smyrna**—which alone of the seven cities flourishes to-day—is situated about fifty miles north of Ephesus, at the sea-end of another great trade-route. It disputed with Ephesus the commercial supremacy of Asia, had a large Jewish settlement, and was early the home of a Christian community, of which Polycarp was bishop until his martyrdom in A. D. 155.

**the first and the last** : see on i. 18 ; also i. 8, where the same attribute is applied to God.

**lived again.** The thought is slightly different from that in i. 17, 'the Living one' ; here it is the moment of the resurrection that is emphasized rather than the continuous life ; cf. Rom. xiv. 9, R. V. The description of Christ here selected is calculated to encourage the struggling church at Smyrna by presenting to its view the Lord in all the power of his endless life.

**9. (but thou art rich).** Cf. Jas. ii. 5, 'Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom . . . ?' (A. V.). Also Ps. xxxv. 10.

**and the blasphemy** (R. V. marg. 'reviling') : i. e. the calumny thou sufferest, proceeding from those, &c.

**Jews** : cf. iii. 9. These are probably Jews by birth who are represented as unworthy of their name. The narrative of the martyrdom of Polycarp shews with what fierce gladness the Jews in Smyrna assisted in the persecution of the Christians.

**a synagogue of Satan.** See below iii. 9, and note.

**10. the devil is about to cast.** The action of the persecutors is ascribed to the evil spirit which prompts them. The predicted sufferings correspond with those more than once foretold by Jesus ; cf. Matt. x. 17-19, xxiv. 9 ; Luke xxi. 12-17 ; and also to those already experienced by the church (Acts viii. 3).

of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write; 12

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**that ye may be tried:** or 'tempted.' The purpose in the mind of the persecutors is that they, the followers of Christ, may be coerced into denying their faith (Heb. xi. 36, 37); in the mind of God, however, who permitted the trial, it was that their faith might be established (cf. 1 Pet. i. 7; Jas. i. 3, 12).

**ye shall have tribulation.** An application to a specific occasion of the general announcement made by Jesus (John xvi. 33).

**ten days.** Not to be understood literally, neither in any symbolical sense, but simply as indicating a brief and definite period.

**faithful unto death:** i. e. up to the point of enduring death for the Name of Christ, in like manner as Christ himself had been 'obedient' up to the point of death (Phil. ii. 8). So xii. 11.

**the crown of life.** So Jas. i. 12; cf. 'crown of righteousness' (2 Tim. iv. 8); 'of glory' (1 Pet. v. 4). The word indicates not a royal diadem, but a victor's wreath (see Trench, *Synonyms*, xxiii; Lightfoot on *Philippians* iv. 1). What is promised is eternal life as a crown of victory.

**11. the second death:** cf. xx. 6. The phrase seems to have its origin in Rabbinic literature. One Targum speaks of 'the wicked who die the second death, and are assigned to Gehenna'; another Targum paraphrases Deut. xxxiii. 6 thus, 'Let Reuben live in this world, and not die the second death.' 'The second death is the final condemnation which sinners undergo at the Judgement of God. The first death is, on the other hand, the natural one' (Bousset).

ii. 12-17. *Letter to the church at Pergamum.*

**12. Pergamum:** an ancient city situated about as far north of Smyrna as Smyrna was north of Ephesus, but some fifteen miles from the coast. Historically and politically it was a place of even greater importance than either of these, as the former capital of a native state; but it was slowly giving way to them in consequence of their better commercial position. It continued, however, to be a very important centre of the religious life of Asia, as the chief seat of the worship of Æsculapius, and still more as

These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged  
 13 sword: 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,

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the earliest seat in that province of the worship of the Roman emperor. Since B. C. 29 there had been a temple here dedicated to Augustus and Rome, with a guild of priests established in its service.

**he that hath the sharp two-edged sword.** This phrase is chosen from the description in i. 16, probably to suggest the presence of power to expose and condemn the followers of the new Balaam.

**13. where thou dwellest.** 'Thy works' is omitted in this case, not that there were none to praise, but because the most striking thing about this church was its situation of peculiar difficulty and danger. The recognition of this by the Lord is calculated to convey encouragement and hope. Ps. cxxxix. 2; John i. 48; 2 Kings xix. 27.

The character of the situation in Pergamum is then exposed in the words **where Satan's throne is**. All other explanations of this phrase (Pergamum, the seat of special idolatry—of the worship of Æsculapius with its serpent-symbol—the scene of special persecution) are only partial and incomplete in comparison with that which recognizes in the throne of Satan set up at Pergamum the dominant worship of the Roman emperor—the diabolical identification of the false worship of a man with political duty and patriotism. 'The city was still officially the capital of the province, and especially it was recognized as the chief centre of the imperial worship, in which the unity and loyalty of the province was expressed. In this latter point lay the peculiar aggravation and abomination. It was the worship of the emperor that was recognized, when the Apocalypse was written, as the special foe of Christianity, as Antichrist, as Satan. It was the refusal of the Christians to pay the proper respect to the emperors, by performing the prescribed acts of ritual and worship in the imperial religion, that formed the test by which they could be detected, and the reason why they were outlawed; their refusal was interpreted as a proof of disloyalty and treason, for it was a refusal to acquiesce in, and to be members of, the imperial unity. Pergamum, as the chief centre of that imperial worship for the province, was the seat and "the throne of Satan"' (Ramsay in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*).

**in the days of Antipas.** Nothing is known concerning this man, or the events with which his name was connected, beyond what may be inferred from this verse, viz. that in some persecu-

my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. 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 stumblingblock 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. Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I

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tion which had befallen the Christians at Pergamum, one at least of their number, Antipas, had been 'tortured, not accepting deliverance,' but 'faithful unto death.' It is interesting to observe the word 'witness' in this passage in transition from its general meaning to that special significance of 'martyr,' which it has in the history of the church.

14. Even this church, whose difficulties and faithfulness called out such tender consideration, had within its border an element of dangerous heresy in certain teachers of false doctrine, who seem to have been at least tolerated up to this point. They are described first, symbolically, as those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, and then directly as Nicolaitans, the same sect that troubled Ephesus at the same time. See ii. 6, note.

**Balaam.** See Num. xxxi. 16, xxv. 1, 2; Jude 11. The point of comparison lies in the method recommended by Balaam to Balak in order to seduce the Israelites from their allegiance to Jehovah, namely, by tempting them to licentiousness. The false teachers of Antinomianism in the Christian church who asserted that, because they were not under the law, but under grace (Rom. vi. 15), therefore what was sin for other men was not sin in them, were practically inculcating the same precepts ('doctrine'), and preparing the same results.

**eat things sacrificed to idols.** See Acts xv. 29; 1 Cor. viii. 9, 10; in the latter passage Paul recognizes the possibility that the liberty he claims might become a stumbling-block to those who were weak.

16. The exhortation to repentance addressed to the church infers an invitation to deal with these false teachers as the church at Ephesus had done, by which they had not been 'borne' but probably cast out.

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.

**17. the hidden manna.** The meaning of this allusion can only be understood in the light of later Jewish tradition and speculation. Aaron had been commanded to 'lay up' a pot or basket of the manna 'before the Testimony' (Exod. xvi. 33). This was taken subsequently to mean 'within the Ark' (so Heb. ix. 4). In later times it became a tradition among the Jews that, before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Ark with all its contents was removed by Jeremiah, in accordance with Divine command, and hidden in a cave of Sinai (see 2 Macc. ii. 1); further, that when the expected advent of the Messiah took place, then these hidden things would be revealed and restored to their ancient place. Among the hidden things then to be revealed they counted the 'manna.' Thus in the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (xxix. 8) we read: 'And at that time the stores of manna shall descend again from above; and they shall eat of it in those years.' It is, therefore, in terms of this Jewish expectation that the promise is here expressed (cf. John vi. 31-33). Those who overcome the temptation to indulge in forbidden meats will receive the heavenly manna as their reward, not merely the restoration of the old privilege, but the partaking of that 'true bread from heaven,' of which even the manna was but a symbol.

**a white stone.** The word suggests not a common stone, but a pebble such as was used for counting or for voting by ballot. Here it must be understood to have a surface large and flat enough to receive an inscription. The difficulty of explaining this figure arises from uncertainty as to which of many uses of such a stone is the basis of the symbolism. Was it connected with (1) the white stone or pebble used by jurors to signify acquittal; (2) a stone tablet which served as a pass to secure entrance into an assembly or a banquet; (3) precious stones which were said by tradition to have been gathered by the Israelites along with the manna; or (4) the Urim and Thummim, the stones of which were also inscribed with names? Each of these theories has its supporters of note, but none of them provides a convincing explanation of the new name upon the stone known only to the receiver. That explanation seems the best which finds the origin of the symbol in the sphere of popular superstition. Among the later Jews, especially, great and mysterious power had for long been ascribed to secret names, the knowledge or pronouncement of which secured the opening of closed portals, the discovery of hid treasure, or the co-operation of supernatural powers. One special application of such names of power was to obtain entrance

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write ; 18  
 These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes

for the ascending soul through the successive gates which were supposed to bar its way to the highest heaven. Such ideas found special currency and continual development in those quarters where Jewish and Hellenic thought were mingling, from which issued early in the second century the speculative systems of Gnosticism. To one holding such ideas, a white stone with a secret name upon it would signify an amulet inscribed with a formula or name of power by which he could secure salvation or entrance into heaven. To this, as to the 'hidden manna,' the Apocalypse gives a Christian interpretation. The white stone is just the pebble or tile or plaque on which a name could conveniently be inscribed. The promised gift of Christ is the new name, which here, as elsewhere in the Bible, stands for a new character (Gen. xxxii. 28; Matt. xvi. 17, 18). Our Lord once more clothes his own great gift in the forms 'understood of the people,' thereby contrasting the false with the true. Did others speak of symbols giving them a right to enter heaven? He would give to him that overcometh a surer symbol for a truer heaven. Did others offer to teach the mighty names before which closed portals would fly back! He would put in his faithful servants' hearts the 'name which is above every name, the name before which every knee must bow, of things on earth and things in heaven and things under the earth'; and with that he would give him the new nature, the character conformed to the image of Christ, which is the real key to the true heaven.

ii. 18-29. *Letter to the church at Thyatira.*

**18. Thyatira.** Unlike the cities to which the previous Letters have been addressed, Thyatira was a place of no great importance; it lay about a day's journey SSE. from Pergamum, on the great high road from that city to Sardis. It was famous chiefly for the flourishing industry of dyeing which was carried on there, a representative of which is found in Lydia, Paul's convert at Philippi (Acts xvi. 14, 15).

**the Son of God.** A title which had not been given to Christ in the description of i. 13 ff. Seeing that the second Psalm is evidently the source of much of the phrasing of this Epistle, it is natural to trace this clause, in the first instance, to Ps. ii. 17; the attributes of the Messiah are transferred spontaneously and without modification to the risen Jesus. The title had been claimed, indirectly, by Jesus (Matt. xi. 27; Luke x. 22); assigned to him by Peter (Matt. xvi. 16); and formed the basis of the charge against him before the Sanhedrin (Matt. xxvi. 68; John

like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished  
 19 brass: I know thy works, and thy love and faith and  
 ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more  
 20 than the first. But I have *this* against thee, that thou  
 sufferest the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a

xix. 7; cf. Rom. i. 3, 4, viii. 3, 32). 'We must recognize without hesitation that Christ in the Apocalypse is elevated to the plane of God' (Reuss).

**who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass.** See i. 14, 15. These distinctive features are emphasized here, because it is searching and crushing power that is to be manifested in the threatened judgement upon Thyatira.

**19. thy works.** See on ii. 2. The word 'and' is explanatory; the works of this church are love and faith, and ministry and patience. The love and faith may be towards God, in which case they form a pair of characteristics contrasting with service and patience, which find expression in relations with men; or the first two also may have only a human reference, signifying 'brotherly love' (cf. note on ii. 2), and 'good faith' or 'honour,' as in Gal. v. 22, R. V.

**and that thy last works are more than the first:** differing herein from those of Ephesus; cf. ii. 4, 5; 2 Pet. ii. 20.

**20.** The fault here, as at Pergamum, is the toleration of the false teaching.

**the woman Jezebel.** The rejected reading 'thy wife' has arisen from the idea in the mind of some copyist that the 'angel' of the church was its bishop. Touching the significance of this name, there are two points to be ascertained regarding it. (1) Does it (a) stand for an actual individual, or (b) symbolize a party, heresy, or tendency towards false teaching? And (2) does the person or party it refers to exist (a) within the church, or (b) outside it? The only light on these questions comes from the context, and from comparison with the parallel remonstrances addressed to the churches at Ephesus and Pergamum. The emphatic description, 'the woman,' and the characterization of her claim to be a prophetess (cf. the claim of the false teachers at Ephesus to be apostles), and of her activity in leading the people astray (cf. the activity of the Nicolaitans, ii. 14), confirm the impression that the writer has a real woman before his eyes; while the character of the false teaching, encouragement of licentiousness, and latitudinarianism in regard to things offered to idols, point to an influence operating within the church to lead its members from the right way. This last consideration tells heavily against the suggestion, otherwise attractive, which has

prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time that she should repent; and 21 she willeth not to repent of her fornication. Behold, I 22 do cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery

been put forward by Schürer, who makes it at least probable that Thyatira was a seat of the Chaldaean Sibyl, and raises the question whether, under the figure of 'Jezebel,' we ought not to recognize the priestess of that heathen shrine. It remains most probable that the reference is to some well-known and influential woman within the church at Thyatira, whose influence on the Christian community was parallel to that of Jezebel upon Ahab—a self-styled 'prophetess,' whose teaching and example were alike destructive of Christian morality. 'The prophets and prophetesses were, at the time when the Letters before us were written, still, in part at least, the foremost authorities in the congregations. There is therefore nothing startling in finding here also a prophetess playing a part in a sect of false teachers. It is, however, worthy of note that just here in Thyatira—which later on became probably one of the chief centres of Montanism—false prophetism had to be attacked' (Bousset).

**21. I gave her time.** This false teaching was therefore no new thing at Thyatira, but warning had already been given and opportunity to repent, possibly by the Apostle John himself.

**she willeth not.** So R. V., marking this true meaning of the Greek. Cf. Matt. xxiii. 37, 'and ye would not'; John v. 40, vii. 17, 'if any man willeth.'

**22. I do cast.** The present tense signifies that the judgement is just about to begin or has already begun.

**into a bed.** There is an ironical correspondence between the judgement and the sin. The parallelism with 'great tribulation' suggests that it is a bed of sickness or of pain which is to take the place of the bed of lust. A striking parallel to the whole will be found in Heine's description of his 'mattress-grave,' and of God as 'the great Master of irony.'

**commit adultery.** If we understand Jezebel to represent an actual personality, then this phrase, and the reference to 'her children,' will also describe actual persons, 'her proper adherents, not those who suffer her, but those who are begotten of her, and go to constitute her.' The change in the word used to describe her shame—from 'fornication' to 'adultery'—recalls the well-known symbolism of the O. T. for rebellious and idolatrous Israel, and suggests at least the thought that the libertinism, which was taught and practised at Thyatira, flourished

with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her  
 23 works. And I will kill her children with death; and all  
 the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth  
 the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of  
 24 you according to your works. But to you I say, to the  
 rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this  
 teaching, which know not the deep things of Satan, as  
 25 they say; I cast upon you none other burden. Howbeit

under the name of religion, and involved infidelity towards God, as well as surrender to the lusts of the flesh.

**23. with death:** marg. 'pestilence,' as the Plague has often gone by the simple name of 'the Death.'

**all the churches.** The recognition of God's judgement upon the adherents of Jezebel was to be as widespread as the scandal of their proceedings had been. Their punishment would be such as to vindicate the authority of Christ in all the churches round about.

**he which searcheth the reins and hearts:** i. e. the inmost thoughts and desires of a man. Once more, an attribute of God; cf. Pss. vii. 9, xxvi. 2; Jer. xvii. 10.

**24. as many as have not this teaching.** Those who did, and those who did not, hold this teaching, are plainly contemplated as belonging to the same circle, i. e. both within the pale of the Christian church.

**as they say:** i. e. the party of the libertines. What did they say? Either they actually offered to their adherents a knowledge of 'the deep things of Satan,' as within their reach as Christ's disciples, pressing liberty into the service of reckless self-indulgence, and wickedly misapplying such texts as, 'All things are yours.' Or, what they offered to the seeker consisted of the same unclean speculations and immoral practices, but under the specious name of the 'deep things of God' (cf. 1 Cor. ii. 10), a phrase which, in that case, must be understood to be interpreted, with sarcastic accuracy, by the speaker into 'deep things of Satan.' (For similar inversions of language compare the O. T., and especially 'Bosheth' for 'Baal.') The diction of this clause, 'who *know* not the *deep things*,' is probably both emphatic and suggestive. It certainly seems to echo the technical language of the Gnostic schools, which were already beginning to disturb the simple faith in Christ of many in the churches of Asia. It was quite in their manner to insist on knowledge of mysteries (*gnōsis*) as an indispensable addition to, or even substitute for,

that which ye have, hold fast till I come. And he that 26  
 overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end,  
 to him will I give authority over the nations: and he 27  
 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. He 28, 29  
 that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the  
 churches.

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write; 3

faith, and also to boast of their power to penetrate into the deep and hidden things of Nature and of God.

**I cast upon you none other burden.** The close similarity of the language to that employed in the decree of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv. 28) is to be observed, and makes it probable that by 'burden' we are to understand 'obligation,' and, by 'other,' 'in addition to those imposed by the authority of the Spirit at that time.' The early prohibitions against fornication, and using meat that had been offered to idols, are re-enacted. These are the things which they are to 'hold fast.'

**26. The works** which the Lord requires of his people are his own works, reproduced in and by them; their victory consists in observing or maintaining them 'to the end' (cf. Mark xiii. 13).

**to him will I give authority.** The imagery of this promise is derived from the familiar description of the rule of Messiah in Psalm ii; see especially verses 8, 9. The enduring disciples of Christ are to be partakers in his Messianic rule.

**27. as I also have received of my Father.** The thought and diction are alike Johannine; cf. John x. 18.

**28. the morning star.** The same image is used in xxii. 16, but there it is a description of Christ himself. Here it is intended, probably, to indicate the freshness and the beauty of the glory with which the redeemed are to be clothed. The glory of the Lord is to be the glory also of his saints (cf. 2 Cor. iii. 18).

**29. He that hath an ear.** This exhortation stands here for the first time *after* the promise, marking a distinction between the first three Letters and those that follow. See above on opening of this chapter.

iii. 1-6. *Letter to the church at Sardis.*

**1. Sardis,** about thirty-five miles south of Thyatira, formerly the prosperous capital of the kingdom of Lydia, and the residence of Cræsus, had sunk rapidly during the Roman domination to

These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead. 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. But thou hast a few names in Sardis which did

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a town of the third rank. Its population had long been notorious for luxury and licentiousness, and it is evident that the Christian community there had a hard struggle to resist the insidious atmosphere by which it was surrounded. All trace of both city and church was obliterated by the Tartar invasion, and only a few ruins and a wretched village now mark its site.

**the seven Spirits of God:** see i. 4. The phrase signifies 'the plenitude of the Godhead in all its attributes and energies.'

**seven stars:** see i. 16, 20.

The condemnation of the church at Sardis is more severe than that of any other church. No good works are ascribed to it. Its apparent 'life' is only an appearance, and in reality it is 'dead in trespasses and sins.' Nevertheless, this death is not absolute or final. There were still some things that remained, still some names that had not defiled their garments: and to them an appeal could still be made, an appeal to awake, to rise from the dead, and to strengthen the graces that survived (cf. Eph. v. 14).

**hast a name:** this closely corresponds with our modern phrase, 'nominally Christian.'

**3. Remember** (cf. the advice to Ephesus, ii. 5) . . . **how thou hast received** (and still hast—the gift of God) **and didst hear** (—the gospel): cf. 1 Thess. i. 5, 6, ii. 13. The exhortation is to remember the past, to keep fast hold of what still remains, and to repent or return to the early disposition which marked the first acceptance of the truth.

**I will come as a thief:** cf. xvi. 15; 2 Pet. iii. 10; Matt. xxiv. 43 ff.

**4.** The situation is critical, but not hopeless. There are even in Sardis a few persons ('names,' cf. Acts i. 15; Rev. xi. 13) who escape the general condemnation, as they have avoided the general corruption. They 'have not sullied the purity of their

not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he

Christian life by falling into sin' (Alford), and their reward is the confirming of their purity.

**they shall walk with me:** i. e. they shall enjoy and be seen in my company; cf. John vi. 66; Mic. vi. 8.

**5. in white garments:** the colour of victory and triumph.

**the book of life.** The root of this idea is found in the roll or register of citizens of Jerusalem, such as is referred to in Isa. iv. 3; this is transferred to a roll of the names of God's people kept by God Himself, such as Moses has in view in his prayer, 'And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written' (Exod. xxxii. 32). So in Ps. lxxix. 28 we read, 'Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written with the righteous.' This idea plays a great part in Jewish apocalyptic literature, in which it is developed to include the deeds as well as the names of God's people in the heavenly record. It is found frequently in the N. T., e. g. Luke x. 20; Phil. iv. 3, and in Rev. xiii. 8, xvii. 8, xx. 12, 15.

**I will confess his name.** The connexion with the words of Jesus recorded in Matt. x. 32, Luke xii. 8, is unmistakable. It does not follow, however, that we have a quotation from a written gospel; it may be derived from reminiscence or oral tradition of what he said.

iii. 7-13. *Letter to the church at Philadelphia.*

**7. Philadelphia:** twenty-eight miles south-east from Sardis, 'rather a rich and powerful city, connected by trade with a large district towards the east and north, for which it formed a centre, and thus well situated to become one of the central churches of Christianized Asia' (Ramsay). One of the Letters of Ignatius was addressed to Philadelphia, and from it, as from this Epistle, we gather that the condition of this church was satisfactory.

**he that is holy:** used here only in Revelation of Christ: elsewhere (e. g. Rev. vi. 10, also in combination with 'he that

that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and none  
 8 shall shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth: I know  
 thy works (behold, I have set before thee a door opened,  
 which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and  
 didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name.  
 9 Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them which

is true') it is specifically an attribute of the Most High; as in the O. T. (Job vi. 10; Isa. xl. 25, and Hab. iii. 3).

**he that is true.** There is a distinction between this word and the one commonly translated 'true' (see Trench, *Synonyms*), corresponding to the distinction between 'genuine' and 'truthful.' It is not, however, necessary to press the distinction here, beyond observing the suitability of the epithet 'genuine' to him who had described himself as 'the Truth.'

**the key of David:** cf. i. 14. The phrase comes down from Isa. xxii. 22, 'And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.' Christ 'is as a son over his house,' i. e. the house of God (Heb. iii. 6, R. V. marg.); it is he who admits to, and he who excludes from, the household of faith, the community of God's people.

**8. a door opened:** this may be understood of (1) Entrance into eternal life; (2) entrance into God's kingdom to be established upon earth; or (3) entrance into a field of successful missionary activity. As the last is the sense in 1 Cor. xvi. 9, 2 Cor. ii. 12, and Col. iv. 3, it is probably the meaning here.

**none can shut** will then mean that the efforts of the opponents of the gospel, probably the Jews, will be vain.

**that thou hast a little power.** The rendering of the R. V. assumes that this clause is the object of 'I know'—explanatory of 'thy works.' It is better to understand—'because little is the strength that thou hast,' and to take the clause as an explanation of the Lord's consideration for their state, inasmuch that he actually opens the door through which their duty calls upon them to press.

**and didst keep:** i. e. 'and yet hast kept, although thy strength is little.'

**9. I give of the synagogue of Satan.** The construction is interrupted, and the sentence taken up again in a slightly different form with 'I will make.' The phrase, 'synagogue of Satan' (cf. ii. 9), probably arises through the sarcastic alteration of the title which these false worshippers claimed for themselves, viz. 'Synagogue of the Lord'—for this is the Greek rendering of

say they are Jews, and they 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 10 keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that *hour* which is to come upon the

'assembly' or 'congregation' 'of the Lord' in Num. xx. 4, xxxi. 16.

**which say they are Jews, and they are not.** The situation at Philadelphia is plainly parallel to that at Smyrna. The difficulties and sufferings of the Christians are due to the persecution of those who, though Jews by blood, do not deserve the noble name.

**come and worship before thy feet.** The phrasing of the thought is derived from Isa. xlv. 14, as may be seen in the English Version, but is yet more evident from the LXX. Observe how the Christian church has taken the place of Sion as the inheritor of these promises, while the Jews, to whom these promises first were made, fall back into the position of the enemies of God's people.

**and to know:** cf. Isa. xlix. 23. The Divine judgements have an educative purpose; they serve to convince men of their true relation to God: Ezek. v. 13, vi. 7, 13, vii. 4.

**that I have loved thee:** this also is transferred from Israel to the church of Christ; see Isa. xliii. 4; Mal. i. 2.

10. The sense is practically the same whether we render, **the word of my patience** (cf. 2 Thess. iii. 5; 2 Cor. i. 6), or 'my word of patience.' Christ had been at once the inculcator and the great example of endurance, enduring the Cross and despising the shame.

**I also will keep thee.** The wording is emphatic: 'I, on my side, will do the same for thee,' viz. 'keep.' The reward of 'keeping' is being kept; cf. John xvii. 11, 12, 15.

**the hour of trial:** A. V. 'temptation.' The same word is translated 'temptation' in the Lord's Prayer, and in Jas. i. 2, 1 Pet. i. 6, &c. Trials arising from persecution were among the severest temptations which beset the early Christians, threatening to shake their faith and undermine their loyalty to Christ. This, the evident character of the 'trials' mentioned here, necessarily limits the reference to those among 'them that dwell upon the earth,' who were believers in Christ. This is the first indication in the book of an approaching general persecution, the revelation of which culminates in chap. xiii. 'The prophecy is remarkably characteristic of the prevailing tone of the Apocalypse: it is the tone of immediate expectation of the end; the last great struggle

11 whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. I  
 come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no  
 12 one take thy crown. 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  
 13 from my God, and mine own new name. He that hath

---

throughout the whole inhabited world is at hand; the storm is drawing near; already the Seer beholds the lightning flash' (Bousset).

**11. I come quickly.** The 'coming,' which was for judgement to the false teachers in Pergamum (ii. 16), is for deliverance to the faithful at Philadelphia. The two aspects are combined in xxii. 12; cf. also xxii. 7, 20.

**hold fast.** So in the Letter to Thyatira, ii. 25.

**thy crown.** See on ii. 10; the crown is the reward of victorious endurance reserved for them in heaven.

**12. I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.** The special reward of the victor, in this case, is to receive a position of permanence and usefulness in the glorified sanctuary of the future. The figure is probably derived from the description in 1 Kings vii. 22 of the great pillars in Solomon's temple; cf. Jer. i. 18; also Gal. ii. 9.

**of my God.** Christ speaks thus of the Father also in John xx. 17.

**I will write upon him.** The Greek might equally well mean 'upon it,' i. e. upon the pillar; but the A. V. and R. V. are probably correct in understanding that it is the victor who receives the names upon his forehead, as in xiv. 1, xxii. 4. The idea may be traced to Isa. lvi. 5, 'Unto them will I give . . . a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.' Cf. Isa. lxii. 2. 'As the name of God signifies belonging to Him, so the name of the city of Jerusalem signifies the right of citizenship therein.'

**the new Jerusalem.** More fully described in xxi. 2. In Gal. iv. 26 it is 'the Jerusalem that is above.'

**my . . . new name.** The victor receives three names: the name of God, for whose pleasure he was created; the name of the new society of the redeemed, to which he eternally belongs; and the name of Christ, in that revelation of himself in glory which is necessarily concealed from those who still dwell in this world; cf. xix. 12, 16.

an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write ; 14

These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God : I know 15

iii. 14-22. *Letter to the church at Laodicea.*

14. The circle of the seven churches is completed by Laodicea, situated to the south-east of Philadelphia and the east of Ephesus, in the valley of the Lycus, and only a few miles from Colossæ. This close neighbourhood explains Paul's allusion to the church at Laodicea in his Epistle to the Colossians (iv. 15, 16). The history and characteristics of the place are well brought out by Prof. Ramsay : 'Laodicea was a small city until after the Roman period had begun; then it rapidly became great and rich. Destroyed by an earthquake in A. D. 60, it disdained to seek help from the liberality of the emperor, as many of the greatest cities of Asia had done. Hence its boast, Rev. iii. 17, "I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing." It was renowned for the beautiful glossy black wool of its sheep, and carried on a great trade in garments manufactured from this wool. Owing to its central position at the point where the great trade-route from the East was joined by several branch roads . . . it became a centre of banking and financial transactions. Hence, Rev. iii. 18, "I counsel thee (not to take the gold of thy bankers, but) to buy of me gold refined by fire, and (not the glossy black garments made in the city, but) white garments."'

**the Amen.** In Isa. lxxv. 16 God is called, in the Hebrew (see R. V. marg.), 'the God of Amen.' The force of the description is the same as when Christ says of himself, 'I am the Truth.'

**the faithful and true witness.** This phrase is taken from i. 5. with the addition of 'true,' which occurs as an epithet of Christ in iii. 7. There is special significance in this appeal to the Lord's authority, as 'a teacher sent from God,' in this Letter where he is to demand so complete a change of mind; cf. John xviii. 37.

**the beginning of the creation of God.** This is a variation from the description in i. 5, 'the firstborn of the dead,' but finds its parallel in Col. i. 15, 18, 'the firstborn of all creation.' Here, however, 'beginning' signifies not merely the first to be created, but the incipient principle, or source, as in Prov. viii. 22. Neither can the phrase 'be limited to the thought of the mere material creation, as if equivalent to the statement that by the Word all things were made. It would thus fail to correspond with the two appellations preceding it, which undoubtedly apply to the work of

thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot : I would  
 16 thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm,  
 and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my

redemption, while at the same time the addition of the words "of God" would be meaningless or perplexing . . . We shall not be able to resist the conviction that the words before us refer primarily to the new creation, the Christian church, that redeemed humanity which has its true life in Christ. It is not necessary indeed to exclude the thought of the material creation ; but in so far as it is alluded to, it is only as redeemed, in its final condition of rest and glory' (Milligan).

**15. thy works** here, as before, signify character as manifested in conduct.

**that thou art neither cold nor hot.** The epithets, particularly that rendered 'hot,' are such as are peculiarly suitable to water ; and the figure in the following verse is based upon the nauseating effect of water that is neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm. The condition represented by the word 'cold' is the extreme opposite of the spiritual fervour and zeal signified by 'hot,' i. e. something more than mere 'spiritual coldness.' What we so describe was precisely the condition in which the Laodiceans were, a condition of lukewarmness to which either extreme would have been preferable. The principle underlying such a statement is the same as we find expressed in Matt. xxi. 31, 'Verily I say unto you (the priests and the elders of the people), that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.' The dawn seems sometimes to be the enemy of the day. Better than a comparative warmth, with which men are apt to rest content, would be the absolute cold which would impel them to seek the Sun of Righteousness.

**16.** They who can be thus described are looked on with a kind of abhorrence by the Lord. Their judgement corresponds to that threatened against Ephesus, where also there had been a falling away from the first love. In both cases it is dismissal, but here dismissal with disgust. 'Degradation it were and ruin to become an abhorring unto all flesh : unspeakable degradation, ruin unutterable, to become Christ's abhorrence. We must recollect what did not suffice to make men so, before we can in the least estimate what consummate loathsomeness it is which will suffice. To be dead sufficed not, for all whom he hath quickened were dead in trespasses and sins. To lie in wickedness sufficed not, for the whole world lieth in wickedness, and he came not to condemn the world but to save the world. To be his enemies sufficed not, for we were his enemies when he reconciled us to God by his death. To crucify him sufficed not, for he interceded for his

mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten 17  
riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that  
thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and  
blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold 18  
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

crucifiers' (C. Rossetti). Cf. also Dante's description of the  
Laodicean temper—

'Questo misero modo  
Tengon l' anime triste di coloro  
Che visser senza infamia e senza lodo.  
Mischiato sono a quel cattivo coro  
Degli angeli che non furon ribelli  
Nè fur fedeli a Dio, ma per sè foro.' (*Inferno*, iii. 34.)

**17. I am rich, and have gotten riches.** For the historical  
basis of this self-description see on verse 14. Arrogance and  
self-sufficiency had produced a spirit in this church the exact  
contrary of that humility to which Jesus had given his benediction  
and his promise (*Matt.* v. 3).

**thou:** emphatic; 'thou of all others art the wretched and  
the pitiable one.'

**18. I counsel thee to buy.** *Isa.* lv. 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') affords a close parallel, and further  
shews that the 'buying' is figurative for obtaining, not by purchase,  
but on the usual conditions of the Divine bounty—'let him ask in  
faith, nothing wavering.'

The things to be thus sought and obtained correspond to the  
needs just laid bare—riches for poverty, clothing for nakedness,  
means of cure for blindness. The word translated 'ointment'  
describes rather the cylindrical form in which the medicated  
ointment was made up, and the use of this technical name suggests  
the possibility that there was at Laodicea some special ointment  
passing under this name, with which the spiritual ointment is  
contrasted, as the 'refined gold' with the earthly treasure, and  
the white garments with the black robes of the market.

'Here is no need of a busy search, a tiresome indagation,  
a chaining together of consequences. The soul hath its clothing,  
its vestment of light, upon as cheap terms as the lilies theirs; and  
yet Solomon in all the glory of his famed wisdom was not arrayed  
like it' (John Howe).

19 eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. As  
 many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous  
 20 therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and  
 knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I  
 will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with

**19. As many as I love, I reprove and chasten.** The word translated 'reprove' (A. V. 'rebuke') is used in this sense in John iii. 20, 'lest his works should be reprov'd'; cf. John xvi. 5.

The thought is found in Prov. iii. 12, 'whom the Lord loveth he reproveth': cf. Heb. xii. 6; Job v. 17. But, once more, what in the O. T. is ascribed to Jehovah is here simply transferred to Christ. The word rendered 'chastise' signifies properly 'train,' or 'educate'; then, 'discipline with a view to training'; finally, the word acquires its special meaning from the fact that, through the folly or the obstinacy of the pupil, the training has so often to be through pain—

'They that see the Father's face do not fear His hand.'

**be zealous therefore:** zeal is the direct opposite of lukewarmness; it is demanded as a continuous temper, which has its commencement in an act of repentance or change of mind.

**20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.** The picture seems to be based on the well-known verse in the Song of Solomon (v. 2); and, if so, we have the beginning of the spiritual interpretation of the Song in terms of the relation of Christ to the soul. Observe the sudden change of address from the church—the corporate unity of Christians at Laodicea—to the individual, each individual to whom this Letter might come. Christ stands outside the heart of every one who hears of him, pleading for entrance. The knocking is heard in the inarticulate summons of each Divine providence, rousing attention to the Presence without. The knocking is followed by the voice, in which he 'calleth his sheep by name,' or answers the question of the startled soul, 'It is I.'

**if any man hear my voice.** Cf. John x. 4 and 27, 'My sheep hear my voice.'

**I will come in to him.** So John xiv. 23, 'we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.'

**and will sup with him, and he with me.** Christ himself is at once *hospes atque epulum*, 'host and feast'—the giver of the feast and the Bread of Life (cf. John vi. 54 ff.).

'Blessed it were to break our fast with Christ, and strengthened by that meat to pursue our journey of however many days and nights to the mount of God. Blessed it were to dine with him, and start refreshed to follow him across the storm-beaten

me. He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down 21  
with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down  
with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let 22  
him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened 4

sands of this troublesome world. But to sup with him is to end our day with him in beatitude of final perseverance' (C. Rossetti).

The repetition, with inversion of idea, recalls many similar expressions in the Fourth Gospel; see John vi. 56, xiv. 20, xv. 4, 5, xvii. 21, 23, 26. The diction and the thought of the verse alike are full of elusive echoes of the gospel, all the more striking that they cannot be recognized as direct quotations.

**21. I will give to him to sit down with me.** We find here a combination of ideas which are found lying apart in the Synoptic narrative and in the Fourth Gospel. In the latter (John xvii. 24), we have the announcement, 'I will that, where I am, they also may be with me'; and in Luke xxii. 30, 'ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel'; cf. Matt. xix. 28.

**as I also overcame.** This comparing of his own experience with that of his disciples, even if on a different plane, is again characteristic of Christ as he is presented in the Fourth Gospel.

The greatness and the splendour of this promise cannot be associated with any specific quality in the Laodicean church: rather does it seem to stand here as a climax to all the other promises, and to have a forward glance to the vision of the next chapters, and especially to that of the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

#### iv—v. THE VISION OF ETERNAL REALITIES IN HEAVEN.

The instruction given to the Seer in i. 19 was threefold. He was to write (1) the things which he had seen; (2) the things which are; and (3) the things which shall be hereafter. The first instruction he fulfilled in chap. i; the third is carried out in chap. vi to the end; in chaps. ii—v he describes the things which are. These four chapters again fall into two sections, the first of which, consisting of the Letters to the churches (chaps. ii, iii), serves to depict their situation, and through them, as typical, the situation of the whole church on earth. As a counterpart to these two chapters we have now in chaps. iv, v a description of the situation in heaven, a presentation of those eternal facts and relations in dependence upon which the hidden book of human history is to be unrolled. Closer observation will display a further distinction between chaps. iv and v, a distinction which is most marked in the climax to which they severally lead. In both cases it is a burst of adoring praise,

in heaven, and the first voice which I heard, *a voice* 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. Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold,

but in chap. iv this proceeds only from beings of another order than human, and is addressed to the Lord God Almighty, the Creator. In chap. v, on the other hand, the praise of these same beings is addressed to the Lamb, the Redeemer, on the ground of his redeeming work (v. 9), and the chorus is swelled by the addition of human voices, from 'every creature which is . . . on the earth.' The centre of worship in the one chapter is God the Creator; in the other, God the Redeemer.

iv. I-II. *The vision of creative majesty in heaven.* This chapter should be carefully compared with the passages in the O. T., where a like vision is described, and especially with Isa. vi. 1-4; Ezek. i. 24-28; Dan. vii. 9-10. From such comparison it will appear how much of the imagery is traditional. A similar comparison with the foregoing chapters of this book will shew the close relation between the sections. Both the thought and the language are closely interwoven, too much so to admit of separate sources.

**1. After these things.** This phrase, which recurs in vii. 8, 9, xv. 5, xviii. 1, and xix. 1, marks in each case one of the more important divisions of the book. It is not necessary to assume an interval of time more or even less considerable, but merely a well-marked stage in the progress of the revelation.

**behold, a door opened in heaven.** John probably means his readers to understand a door in the sky, which would be conceived of by him and by them as a solid vault. This door he now saw standing open, and giving access to the heavenly places.

**and the first voice which I heard:** better, 'the former voice which I had heard,' for even R. V. does not make it perfectly clear that the reference is to the voice of i. 10, the voice he had heard at the first. If it was the Son of Man who spoke then, it must be the same now.

**the things which must come to pass.** There is plainly a connexion of thought here with i. 19; the promise begins to find its fulfilment with the opening of the first Seal (vi. 1).

**2. Straightway I was in the Spirit.** The repetition of this phrase, which has already occurred in i. 10, has caused unnecessary difficulty. It has been thought to indicate forgetfulness on the part of the writer of what he has already stated, or, by others, the presence of a new document. But we must not force upon

there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne; and he that sat *was* to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon.

the Apocalypse a logical precision which is alien to the character of the composition. Seeing that 'being in the Spirit' was a condition of receiving the revelation, it was only natural that John should connect a further revelation, either with a further accession of spiritual ecstasy, or with a repetition of the initial experience.

**and behold, there was a throne set in heaven.** Ezek. x. 1, 'And behold, in the firmament that was over the head of the cherubim, there appeared above them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne'; cf. also Ezek. i. 26; Dan. vii. As with the door in heaven, so with the throne, it is already and eternally there. The clearing of the prophet's vision only serves to display its presence.

**and one sitting upon the throne.** It adds to the mysterious dignity of the scene that John does not name him 'that sitteth upon the throne.' In Isaiah it is 'the Lord, high and lifted up'; in Ezekiel, 'a likeness as the appearance of a man'; in Daniel, 'one that was ancient of days did sit.' It is the Eternal Father who is enthroned, distinguished in verse 5 from the Spirit, and in vi. 16, vii. 10, from the Son, and described expressly as 'God which sitteth upon the throne' in vii. 10, xix. 4.

**3. a jasper stone and a sardius.** The jasper is referred to as one of the stones of the high-priest's breastplate (Exod. xxviii. 20), as forming the battlements of the ideal Sion (Isa. liv. 12, LXX), and in Rev. xxi. 11 as 'a stone most precious, . . . clear as crystal.' From these passages it would seem to denote not our jasper of to-day, which is neither very costly nor translucent, but some other stone, possibly the diamond, or, as Dr. Cheyne thinks, the opal, 'which by its brilliance and play of colour has always been one of the most attractive of the precious stones, and in its choicest variety deserves in the highest degree the description in Rev. xxi. 11.' The sardius, on the other hand, probably answers to our cornelian, being opaque, and of a deep dull red, the colour of fire or blood.

**and there was a rainbow round about the throne.** Ezek. i. 27, 'and from the appearance of his loins and downward I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.' The bow must be conceived as arching over the throne, like the vertical nimbus of sacred art, not as a horizontal ring.

**like an emerald to look upon.** It is in its shape and

4 And round about the throne *were* four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones *I saw* four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their

significance rather than in its prismatic colours that the bow resembles the natural rainbow. The emerald green colour suggests the freshness and the fertility which follow on 'the day of rain' (see the quotation from Ezekiel), and, metaphorically, the 'seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.'

**4. And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones.** The rendering in the A. V. obscures the fact that the same word is used of the one and of the twenty-four. These must be imagined as set in a half-circle—twelve on either side of the central throne.

**four and twenty elders.** Before making any attempt to explain the significance of these much discussed figures, it will be well to observe what we are told concerning them in the text. (1) They occupy thrones which are set in a circle, or a semi-circle, round the throne of the Most High. (2) They wear white garments, and have crowns of gold upon their heads. Both these features suggest royal dignity and authority. (3) They are called 'elders,' in the Greek 'presbyters.' (4) They are four and twenty in number. We find further (iv. 9) that they fall down and worship 'him that sitteth upon the throne,' and cast their crowns before the throne. In verse 8 they, together with the living creatures, fall down in like manner before the Lamb; they have harps and golden bowls full of incense; they take part in singing the new song, and also in the worship of God described in v. 14, xi. 16, xix. 4. Finally, one of their number, who is addressed by the Seer as 'my Lord' (vii. 14, see below), explains to him 'who these are' that are arrayed in white robes.

Almost all commentators have found in these figures glorified human beings, who are found occupying this position as, in some sense or other, representative of the church. Speculation as to who or what they represent is governed by the meaning assigned to the number 'four and twenty.' (1) It has been supposed by Ewald, Hilgenfeld, and others that the conception starts from the four and twenty classes or courses of priests which are enumerated in 1 Chron. xxiv. But these elders are not priests. The only features which point that way are the white robes—which are equally characteristic of regal and of priestly dignity—and the holding of bowls of incense, 'which are the prayers of the saints.' But as they are only said to 'hold,' or 'have,' these bowls, it is only an inference that they present them, and this

heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceed 5

again is not necessarily a priestly action. On the other hand, neither the 'thrones' nor the 'crowns' harmonize with the priestly character; they point rather to the regal. (2) The number has been understood by Bleek, Weizsäcker, and others as formed by the doubling of the number 'twelve,' with a view to symbolizing the complete church, made up of the twelve tribes of the O. T. and a corresponding number from the N. T. church. Carrying this explanation a step further, others have seen an allusion to the Twelve Patriarchs, and the Twelve Apostles. But none of these explanations is better than a guess, and they are all open to the objection that the idea of the church of Christ, as formed by a combination of the O. T. church and the New, is not primitive, but mediæval. The relevant fact most conspicuously present to the mind of the early church was that Christ had made both one. Even xxi. 12, 14 does not prove the contrary, as the names of the twelve tribes are on the *gates*, and those of the apostles on the the twelve *foundations*. Were the two indeed co-ordinated, there would have been twenty-four *gates*, or twenty-four foundations.

The difficulty of finding any satisfactory explanation of these figures, as representative human beings, suggests the question whether they belong to this order at all. That this is a vision of the things 'that are' precludes any interpretation in the light of Matt. xix. 28, Luke xxii. 28 ff., where the reference is to what is to take place 'in the regeneration,' at the final crisis of judgement. And since the other figures in this scene, the 'living creatures,' belong undoubtedly to the order of heavenly beings, antecedent probability lies with those who, like Spitta and Gunkel, maintain that the elders also belong to this order—that they are angels. From Isa. xxiv. 23 we learn that the name of 'elders' (E. V. 'ancients') was given to certain angelic beings, who seem to have been conceived as a kind of Divine consistory assembled in the presence of God. Confirmation of this is found in the lately-discovered *Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, where we read (iv. 1), 'And they brought before my face the elders and the rulers of the orders of the stars'; and in the *Judgement of Peter* (Hilgenfeld, *Nov. Test.* 102f.), 'For there are four and twenty elders, twelve upon the right hand and twelve upon the left.' We ought, therefore, to see in these 'elders,' in all probability, a group of angelic beings, whose presence in the heavenly temple was part of the ancient Jewish tradition on the subject. Cf. Col. i. 16, where 'thrones' probably refers to the same class of angels. On the whole question of the Jewish doctrine of 'Angels' the student should consult the article in Hastings'

lightnings and voices and thunders. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are 6 the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne, as it were a glassy sea like unto crystal; and in the midst of

*Dictionary of the Bible*, and, if possible; Weber's *Jüdische Theologie*, pp. 162-177.

**5. lightnings and voices and thunders.** So also xi. 19, xvi. 18, vii. 5. The lightnings and thunders are connected with the presence of God in Exod. xix. 16; to which the Epistle to the Hebrews (xii. 19) adds 'the voice of words' working fear in the hearts of those who heard.

**seven lamps of fire . . . which are the seven Spirits of God.** See i. 4, and note. As the unity of the church on earth, realized through diversity, is symbolized by the seven lamp-stands (i. 16), so the unity of the Spirit in all the diversity of his operation is symbolized by these seven 'torches' which burn continually before the throne.

**6. and before the throne, as it were a glassy sea like unto crystal.** The picture is, 'what looked like a sea of glass, so smooth and calm it was, and, moreover, not dull and opaque, as most ancient glass was, but bright and glittering like rock crystal.'

The origin of this conception of a 'sea' or stream before the Throne of God lies far back in Hebrew thought. In Gen. i. 7 we find 'the waters that were above the firmament' answering to the waters that were below it. Beyond these upper waters, therefore, lay the Throne of God. Thus in the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch* the Seer beholds in the first heaven above the other 'a very great sea, greater than the sea on earth.' According to the *Testament of the XII Patriarchs* ('Levi'), this sea lies between the first and the second heavens (Bousset). And so, in the Greek *Apocalypse of Baruch* we read: 'He took me and brought me thither where are the battlements of heaven, and where there is a stream which no one is able to pass over.'

It is at least probable that this conception of the heavenly sea was what was symbolized by the 'molten sea' which stood in Solomon's temple (1 Kings vii. 23, 39; 2 Kings xvi. 17) 'on the right side of the house, eastward towards the south.' When the smoothness and the beauty of this interspace were emphasized rather than its likeness to the sea, we have it described as a 'paved work of sapphire stone, as it were the very heaven for clearness' (Exod. xxiv. 10); cf. Ezek. i. 22; Job xxxvii. 18.

There is no need to seek for a symbolic meaning for this sea; its value in the picture will be sufficiently understood as serving to enhance the majesty and splendour of the scene.

**and in the midst of the throne, and round about the**

the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. And the first 7

**throne.** The simplest way to understand this difficult collocation of ideas is to suppose that the living creatures are seen supporting the throne, one of them in the middle of each side, and so all of them round about it.

**four living creatures** (so R. V. in place of the most unsuitable rendering of A. V. 'beasts'). The word properly means simply, 'living things.' There can be no doubt that the writer derived his description of these figures from the vision of Ezekiel (see especially chap. i), where four 'living creatures' support 'the likeness of a firmament,' above which there is 'a likeness of a throne,' and upon the likeness of the throne a 'likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above.' On comparing this passage with Ezek. x. 1, 20 we find that these 'living creatures' are identical with the 'cherubim'; the four living creatures of the Revelation also are four cherubim. What further significance is to be attached to them as such, it is very difficult to say. 'The Jews regarded them as supernatural beings, without attempting to define them.' It is possible that they represented, if not originally, in course of time, a fourfold division of animal nature into birds, cattle, wild beasts, and men. Behind this there may have been some dim conception of the forces of Nature. The main thing is to observe how frequently they are introduced as the supporters or vehicles of the Divine power. Cf. 2 Kings xix. 15; Pss. lxxx. 1, xcix. 1; Isa. xxxvii. 16. 'To the Hebrew poet the cherubim were not only the attendants of Jehovah, but the bearers and upholders of His throne. The thunderclouds are the dark wings of these ministers of God. They bear Him up. And to this, which is the picture presented by the service of the mute forces of nature, there is an analogy presented by the service of God's people. Hence the earthly correlative to "thou that sittest upon the cherubim" is "thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."' See Bishop Ryle's article 'Cherubim' in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*.

**full of eyes before and behind.** In verse 8 it is repeated that they are 'all round and within' full of eyes: in Ezekiel (x. 12), 'their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about.' The meaning is the same here, the description is abbreviated; they have eyes everywhere, symbolizing their unsleeping watchfulness, as they observe and reflect on all sides the Divine majesty of creation.

7. The vision here departs from that in Ezekiel, inasmuch as there each of the cherubim has four faces, and it is the faces

creature *was* like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature *was* like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the

that resemble those of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. Here there is only one face to each living creature, and apparently the likeness is not confined to the countenance, but extends to the whole body.

The traditional association of these four figures with the Four Evangelists is wholly fanciful, and yet it has influenced many forms of Christian art since very early times. 'The same mysterious emblem of Ezekiel was constantly applied to the Evangelists in later times throughout the Christian world, but generally as modified in the Apocalypse, where the idea of individual life prevails over that of common being. Yet, while the early Fathers agreed in the general explanation of the vision, they differed widely in details. In the West the interpretation of Jeromé gained almost universal currency, and in later times has been confirmed by the usage of art. According to this, the man is assigned to Matthew, the lion to Mark, the ox to Luke, and the eagle to John, as typifying respectively the human, active, sacrificial, and spiritual sides of the gospel.' (Westcott, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 249.)

**like a calf.** There is no necessity for limiting the meaning of this word. It may be equally well, and here better, translated, 'ox.'

**8. having each one of them six wings.** The source of the imagery now changes from Ezekiel to Isaiah. To the cherubim are given the wings which specially characterize the seraphs (Isa. vi. 2). Any distinction which may have originally been felt between cherubim and seraphim has now disappeared; cf. *Book of Enoch*, lxxi. 6f., 'And round about were cherubim and seraphim and ophanim; these are they who sleep not, but watch the Throne of His glory.'

**they have no rest.** In addition to the above cf. *Book of Enoch*, xxxix. 12, 'They praise Thee who never sleep.' From this a certain class of angels is in the *Book of Enoch* frequently referred to as the 'watchers'; cf. Dan. iv. 13, 'a watcher and an holy one,' and Dr. Driver's note.

**Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty.** The Trisagion is first found in Isa. vi. 3. For 'Lord of Hosts' there we have here 'Almighty,' as in i. 8, following the LXX rendering

Lord God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come. And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.

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of 'Lord of Hosts.' In the *Book of Enoch*, xxxix. 12, the Trisagion appears with a different conclusion: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Spirits; He fills the earth with Spirits.'

which was and which is and which is to come. Cf. i. 8.

9. And when the living creatures shall give. The sense of the future tense is probably frequentative—'Whenever the living creatures give glory.' It is theirs to give the signal, whereupon the other heavenly powers join in with their worship, kingly though they are, casting their crowns before the King of Kings, leaving their thrones to prostrate themselves before Him, and breaking into the great hymn of praise for creation.

11. all things. The universal whole, the universe.

because of thy will: i. e. because thou didst will it. "For thy pleasure" of the A. V. introduces an element entirely strange to the context, and, however true in fact, most inappropriate here' (Alford).

they were, and were created. If there is any distinction to be drawn between these two ideas, it must be that the first presents the simple fact of their existence (cf. Acts xvii. 28, 'have our being,' a translation of the same verb), while the second emphasizes their existence as created.

'In the song of praise here put into their mouths they have not yet advanced to the thought of salvation. That is reserved for the next chapter. Here they think of creation and all its wonders: of the heavens which declare God's glory, and the firmament which shews forth His handiwork; of sun, and moon, and stars in their manifold and resplendent glories; of the mountains and the valleys; of the rivers and the fountains of waters; of the rich exuberance of vegetable life which covers the earth with a gorgeous carpet of every hue; and of all those animals upon its

5 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close

surface which "run races in their mirth": and for them they praise. In Him they live and move and have their being. Because of His will they *were*—let the reading be considered and remembered: "were," not "are"—because of His will they were in His idea from all eternity; and when the appointed moment came, they *were created*. Wherefore let them praise' (Milligan).

V. 1-14. DESCRIPTION OF 'THE THINGS THAT ARE' IN HEAVEN CONTINUED.

This chapter is a counterpart or complement to the foregoing. The two moments of Divine activity in relation to men are Creation and Redemption; and to the description of the eternal adoration of the Almighty Creator in heaven now follows a description of the adoration of the Lamb as Redeemer. But both creation and redemption have a future as well as a past: He who created all things 'through His will' is yet to make new heavens and a new earth; and so he who has already purchased men unto God has still a work to carry out in the application of redemption to human history. And this is the central thought of the fifth chapter, though its climax is the hymn of praise to the Redeemer-Lamb. The future is in the hand of him that once was slain. And the token thereof is that he alone has power to open the book that contains its secrets.

v. 1-7. *The sealed book.*

1. **And I saw in the right hand:** better, 'upon the right hand.' The book thus held out is free to be taken and opened by any one who is worthy.

**a book.** It is not easy to decide in what form this book is to be imaged, whether as a volume made up of separate leaves, like our modern books, or as a continuous roll, such as was the common form in antiquity. Were it the latter, it would of course be easier to understand how it was sealed with seven seals, along the outside edge; on the other hand, it would be difficult to represent to oneself how the opening of these seals in succession could effect the opening of successive parts of the book. The opening of the seals would, however, be meaningless, unless it were somehow connected with the progressive unfolding of the contents of the book. These are plainly intended to be recognized in the events which follow on the opening of each seal. This difficulty is not met by Alford's argument. If the contents of the book are not to be made known until 'those material events which mark the gradual opening of God's purposes are all past,' if, that is to say,

sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel <sup>2</sup> proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no one in <sup>3</sup> the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon. And I wept <sup>4</sup> much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look thereon: and one of the elders saith <sup>5</sup>

all that follows in this Book of Revelation is but preliminary to the reading of the sealed book, its introduction here will be quite incomprehensible. It is tempting, therefore, to suppose, with Spitta and others, that the book consists of leaves of parchment, each pair of which is fastened together with a seal, the seal possibly depending from a cord. But it is probably unwise to push our curiosity very far in such directions. It is the total impression that is of importance, and that is of a book having for its contents the judgements of God, 'the things which are to be hereafter,' which are successively displayed through the successive opening of the seals.

**written within and on the back.** Books so written were not unknown in antiquity, as may be seen from references to them in classical literature. In these cases the practice was prompted by the desire to make all possible use of the valuable parchment. Here, however, the feature suggests the fullness and minuteness of the Divine foreknowledge of events. It is useless to speculate as to how the writer knew that it was so—he knew it later if he did not see it at the time: that he did know it, however, shews that at one time or other the open book was displayed to his sight.

**2. Who is worthy . . . ?** The question recalls a similar one put in a like scene, Isa. vi. 8, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' That the voice in the one case is 'of the Lord,' and in the other 'of a strong angel,' is consistent with the disposition in later times to emphasize the transcendence of God.

**3. in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth.** The phrase may be used in a proverbial way to express, in the strongest possible form, 'no one whatever'; if the literal meaning is to be pressed, the last clause, 'under the earth,' must be understood of the dwellers in the underworld, the dead. In Phil. ii. 10 the same language is used in the prediction of the universal worship to be paid to Jesus.

**4. And I wept much.** The reason of the Seer's grief, that no one came forward to open the book, must be found in his fear lest the promise that he should be shewn things to come might fail, in the absence of one worthy to open the book.

unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome, to open the book and the seven seals thereof. And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living

**5. the Lion . . . of the tribe of Judah.** The phrases here used to describe the Lamb shew the writer's familiarity with Messianic prophecy, as it was understood by the Jews, while his designation of the new figure as the Lamb proves his profound apprehension of the interpretation of the Messianic hope revealed in and by Jesus Christ. It is generally agreed that this first phrase is derived from the blessing of his sons by Jacob (Gen. xlix. 9), 'Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up.' That the Jews interpreted this as a prophecy of the Messiah is seen from such a passage as the Midrash, *Jalkut Schimeoni*, which says, commenting on this verse, 'that is Messiah, the son of David, for he shall go forth from two tribes. His father descends from Judah, his mother from Dan. And both tribes bear the name of "Lion."'

'He looked to see a Lion, and beheld a Lamb. He looked to see power and force, whereby the foes of his faith should be destroyed, and he saw love and gentleness by which they should be conquered, by being transformed into friends. The might of Christ is the power of love. The captive train which he leads in his triumphal march is composed of those who are bound to him by the golden chains of love and gratitude. The Lamb, as though it had been slain, stands in the midst of God's throne. At the heart of God's sovereignty is sacrificial and suffering love' (Stevens).

**the Root of David.** The source of this phrase is found in Isa. xi. 1, 10, 'And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit. . . . And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, which standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek.' 'Root' is used here, as in the second of these passages, of what is properly described in Isa. xi. 1 as a 'shoot,' i. e. a branch or sucker coming up from an ancient root. In like manner Christ says of himself, xxii. 16, 'I am the root and the offspring of David.'

**hath overcome, to open.** The modification in the R. V. marks the fact that the word 'overcome' is to be taken absolutely, as in ii. 7, 11, &c. What is said is that Christ has won a victory, and the result is that he is empowered to open the book. He himself overcame before he calls upon his disciples to do the like; cf. iii. 21.

**6. in the midst of the throne.** Not, of course, on the throne,

creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of

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but in front of it, at its middle point, and so also in the midst of the elders and of the cherubim.

**a Lamb.** It is remarkable that the word used for 'Lamb' is, so far as the N. T. is concerned, one peculiar to Revelation. It is a diminutive and a neuter; but no distinction of meaning can be drawn between it and that used elsewhere of Christ (John i. 29, 36; Acts viii. 32, translation of Isaiah; 1 Pet. i. 19). Touching the figure—all the references in the New Testament to the Lamb of God (with which the corresponding allusions to the passover are interwoven) spring from the passage in the book of Isaiah' (Delitzsch). 'As a lamb to the slaughter is led, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, he opened not his mouth.' Down to the time of their controversy with the Christians, the Jews commonly interpreted this as a prophecy of the Messiah; and it is possible that in some of their literature, not yet in our hands, connecting links may be found between this picture and the sudden appearance of the phrase in the N. T. as a title of the Messiah. In the *Testament of the XII Patriarchs* ('Joseph') there is a passage which, though probably of Christian origin, is interesting as bringing together ideas which also meet here: 'And I saw that out of Judah a virgin was born . . . and out of her proceeded a lamb without blemish, and on his left hand as a lion, and all the beasts fell upon him, and the lamb overcame them.'

**standing, as though it had been slain:** the Greek word suggests 'slain in sacrifice.' The Lamb had upon him still the marks of the wounds by which he had been slain (John xx. 25, 27); and yet stood in the position of a living creature, being indeed one 'that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore.'

**seven horns, and seven eyes.** The traditional and metaphorical significance of these was so familiar that the physical image would be quite subordinate for the writer, and give him no perplexity. 'Horns' stand for power (cf. 1 Sam. ii. 10; Pss. cxii. 9, cxlviii. 14; Dan. vii. 7, 20), and 'eyes' for insight and intelligence (Zech. iii. 10; Rev. iv. 6, 8). That there are seven in each case signifies that both the power and the intelligence were Divinely perfect and complete. The eyes are identified with the 'seven spirits' (cf. i. 4, iv. 5), which represent the active and all-pervasive wisdom of God. 'As the seven burning lamps before the throne represented the Spirit of God immanent in the Godhead, so the seven eyes of the Lamb represent the same Spirit in his seven-fold perfection, profluent, so to speak, from the incarnate Redeemer; busied in his world-wide and world-long energy: the

7 God, sent forth into all the earth. And he came, and he taketh *it* out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.  
9 And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to

very word "sent forth" reminding us of the *apostolic* work and church, and its tense betokening repetition, and endurance to the end' (Alford). Cf. 2 Chron. xvi. 9, 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth.'

**7. And he came, and he taketh:** takes and still keeps. The revelation of the future is an abiding possession in the hand of the Lamb.

v. 8-14. *The adoration of the Lamb.*

**8.** The same worship as in chap. iv is offered to 'him that sits upon the throne' is now by the same creatures offered to the Lamb. **having each one a harp** (cf. xiv. 2, xv. 2; Ps. cxlvii. 7). We should possibly see these in the hands of the 'elders' only.

**golden bowls full of incense.** Cf. Ps. cxli. 2, 'Let my prayer be set forth as incense before thee'; also Rev. viii. 3, and note there. 'The offering of incense is quite unknown in the primitive time. It is mentioned for the first time in Jer. vi. 20, and then as something rare, and therefore costly, but also as something unnecessary. The silence of the older literature cannot be an accident; we must therefore assume that it had been introduced not long before Jeremiah. . . . In any case, its appearance is connected with the expansion of commerce under the later kingdom, and the introduction of greater luxury' (Benzinger).

**which are the prayers of the saints.** This is the natural explanation of the symbolism of incense, and is stated here as part of the common belief on the subject. It is only said that 'each' had or held a harp and bowls full of incense; that they either played on the harps, or 'offered' the contents of the bowls, is nothing more than an inference, and even were the inference correct, it is a further inference, for which there is no ground in the text, to suppose that 'the prayers of the saints' are intercessions for the church, or intercessions at all. The 'saints' are those dedicated to God, whether wholly sanctified or being sanctified; whether triumphant in heaven or militant on earth. It is the N. T. designation of the people of God, as 'holy' is their designation in the O. T.

**9. they sing a new song.** As in verse 7 the tense seems to

take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain; and didst purchase unto God with thy blood *men* of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them *to be* unto our God a kingdom and 10 priests; and they reign upon the earth. And I saw, 11

indicate the writer's consciousness that the scene he is describing is one that continues eternally. The 'new song' (cf. xiv. 3; Pss. xxxiii. 3; xcvi. 1; Isa. xlii. 10) is new because there is a new theme, even for the choirs of heaven, in the accomplishment of redemption.

**and didst purchase unto God:** in place of A. V. 'hast redeemed us to God.' The omission of 'us' here and below changes the character of the song, and removes the necessity of regarding any of the groups who share in it as belonging to redeemed humanity. These offer praise as spectators of the drama of Divine mercy; later on, in verse 13, they are joined by 'every created thing.' The object to 'didst purchase' has to be supplied out of the meaning of the next clause. For the idea of salvation as involving purchase cf. 1 Cor. vi. 20, vii. 23; Rev. xiv. 3, 4; Matt. xx. 28. The sphere or power from which the purchase sets free is not suggested here; on the other hand, both the sphere into which the transfer is made and the condition by which the purchase is accomplished are indicated. Men are purchased to God, and become His 'purchased possession' (1 Pet. ii. 9).

**with thy blood.** The blood which signifies the life of Christ wholly offered up to God, 'even unto the death of the cross,' is not so much the instrument (A. V. 'by') as the vehicle or 'conditioning element' of the purchase. See Acts xx. 28, where the preposition, however, is different.

**of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.** The phrase, which occurs again in vii. 9, is not to be pressed in its details; it simply expresses the universality of the work of Christ.

**and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests:** cf. i. 6. The reading 'kingdom' in place of 'kings' brings the thought into closer harmony with 1 Pet. ii. 9, and the addition in this place of 'they reign upon earth' completes the cycle of ideas. 'Here we have three particulars: (1) Those who are bought to be God's own, are made into a kingdom, viz. God's; (2) they are made into priests; (3) they are invested with kingly power.' The reading accepted by our Revisers ('and they reign') is said by Bousset (who prefers 'and they shall reign') to be poorly attested; but it is adopted by Westcott and Hort, and by the Stuttgart editors.

and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand,  
 12 and thousands of thousands; saying with a great voice,  
 Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the  
 power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour,  
 13 and glory, and blessing. And every created thing which  
 is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth,

11. The new song is now taken up and continued by the innumerable angelic hosts which surround and enclose the scene that has been described. As in Dan. vii. 10 and Rev. ix. 16, the numbers serve only to suggest 'a multitude which no man could number.' The literal meaning is 'myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.' The two phrases are combined also in Dan. vii. 10; cf. *Enoch*, quoted on i. 14.

12. Compare and contrast iv. 11. ~~that hath been slain~~ answers to 'for thou didst create,' in giving the reason of the worthiness. It is noticeable that it is sevenfold honour that is paid to the Lamb, as in vii. 12; it has been pointed out that elsewhere (iv. 11, xix. 1) such praises fall into groups of three and four. The use of numbers in the literature of apocalypse is not so much artificial as instinctively appropriate.

**blessing** is used 'in the sense so frequent when the word and its cognate verb are used of an act passing from man to God: viz. that of ascribed praise; the will on the part of the creature, though unaccompanied by the power, to return blessing for blessing conferred' (Alford).

13. Once more the circle of the worshipping host is enlarged, this time by the inclusion, along with the hosts of heavenly beings, of the representatives of humanity and of all creation, of which this earth is the centre.

**which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth.** The same phrase as in verse 3; but with the addition of **and on the sea, and all things that are in them.** There is no need to press for a definite interpretation of each clause; the whole serves to describe the totality of animated creation. See Ps. viii. 6-9, and especially verse 8, 'The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas': cf. also Rev. viii. 9.

Now, at the climax of this section (chaps. iv, v) the worship that has been offered to Him that sits upon the throne (iv. 10), and that offered to the Lamb (v. 8), flow together into one stream. The collocation of these two figures, as the joint object of the

and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, *be* the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever. And the four 14 living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped.

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highest worship on the part of a writer who must have held the intense Jewish faith in monotheism, is not a little remarkable. The more we learn to emphasize the Jewish elements in his consciousness and in his material, the more we shall be impressed with his inmost breach with Judaism, his audacity, from the Jewish point of view, in equating Christ with God. Such things must be borne in mind when weighing the impression made by Jesus on contemporaries.

**14. And the four living creatures said, Amen.** The antiphony is thus complete. All forms of sentient being, heavenly and earthly, angelic and human, find their unity and solidarity in this worship of God, Creator and Redeemer. 'Amen' is used 'for the purpose of adopting as one's own what has just been said'; cf. 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

Notice the omission in R. V. of the closing phrase of A. V., the MS. evidence for which is very slight: the object of their worship is not expressed, but it is plainly God and the Lamb.

This marks the close of the first portion of the book. If we call it the Introduction, it is only because it leads up to that which forms the bulk of the book, for which it probably was written; it has displayed the background of eternal facts against which all human history is transacted; it has revealed in a highly dramatic form the twin principles of the creative power and the redemptive purpose of God, which are the moving forces in that history. It has special relation, therefore, to that section of history which is now about to be dealt with and foreshadowed, and a special message to the generation of God's people which was entangled in the circumstances of the time. Chap. iv is a summons to all perplexed and suffering ones to believe in God; chap. v, a summons to believe in Christ (cf. John xiv. 1). On the other hand, this 'Introduction' has a far wider application than this special one. The Letters to the Seven Churches have given a picture of the 'church militant here on earth,' as it is at all times, in its difficulties and dangers, its temptations and failures, its triumphs and its assured reward. And in the subsequent chapters we have had an interpretation of the facts of history—that God made the world, and that He is redeeming man, in terms of eternity; an interpretation

6 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven  
 seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying  
 2 as with a voice of thunder, Come. And I saw, and  
 behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a

whose validity is approved by its relation to the facts, while its value is limited to no single period of the church's experience.

#### VI. 1—VIII. 1. THE OPENING OF THE SEVEN SEALS.

'With the sixth chapter of the Apocalypse the main action of the book may be said properly to begin. Three sections of the seven into which it is divided have already passed under our notice. The fourth section, extending from vi. 1 to xviii. 24, is intended to bring before us the struggle of the church, the judgement of God upon her enemies, and her final victory. No detail of historical events in which these things are fulfilled need be looked for. We are to be directed rather to the sources whence the trials spring and to the principles by which the victory is gained.' (Milligan).

#### vi. 1-17. *The first six seals.*

**1. And I saw.** This is the standing phrase by which the writer marks a new stage in the process of the revelation, less pronounced than such as he distinguishes by, 'And after these things.' There is, therefore, no great interval of any kind between the close of the last chapter and the opening of this.

**Come.** The words 'and see' are omitted here, and in the subsequent verses, as of inferior MS. authority. They represent probably an early gloss. Their removal leaves open the question, To whom is the summons addressed? Most commentators, and even some who adopt the reading of the R.V., take it to be addressed to the Seer. But whither is he to go, and is he invited to go to a new place at the opening of each seal? Moreover, the word and mode of summons are different here from what we find when such an invitation is given to him; cf. viii. 1, xvii. 1, xxi. 9. Others suppose it to be addressed to the Lord Jesus. But, then, it must surely have been followed by his name, as in xxii. 20; this difficulty is not removed by the reference to xxii. 17, seeing that even there it is far from certain that the summons is addressed to Jesus. Such a summons would not be in place at this point in the book, nor yet upon the lips of the speaker, who is one of the four cherubim. It is far more natural to take it as addressed, both here and in the following cases, to the rider who appears in answer to it.

**2. a white horse.** The vision of the four riders on horses of different colours is based upon the vision of Zechariah (vi. 1-8;

bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forth conquering, and to conquer.

cf. i. 8). There the prophet sees four chariots, the horses in which are respectively red, black, white, and 'grisled bay.' In answer to his inquiry he is told that these 'are the four winds of heaven, which go forth from standing before the Lord of the whole earth.' In the vision of chap. i, the prophet sees horses red, sorrel, and white, and is told concerning their riders that 'These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.' As to the interpretation of these figures in the Apocalypse, there is little difference of opinion regarding the three last. They represent slaughter, famine, and pestilence. But in regard to the first rider and his horse there have been many different opinions. The horse is white, which is the colour of conquest or triumph. The Roman general who was honoured with a 'Triumph' rode upon a white horse; and the crown or wreath is an obvious emblem of victory. There remains the symbolism of the bow to be explained, and possibly to give the clue to the meaning of the figure.

The best supported interpretations of the figure have been as follows: (1) It represents the Lord Christ himself (or some representative of him) coming forth in answer to the summons to 'come,' returning as a victor, 'conquering and to conquer.' The most cogent ground for this is the apparent parallelism with xix. 11, where he whose 'name is called the Word of God' appears on a white horse, with many crowns upon his head. But in that passage he appears at the close of a long series of judgements, leading the hosts of heaven to consummate all things; and there is no real parallelism with this figure which comes forth as the first of four figures, the others of which are plainly precursors of the final issue. Further, it goes even beyond apocalyptic freedom of conception that Christ should be presented at one and the same moment as the Lamb who opens the seals, and the rider who appears in consequence of that opening, if not out of the book itself. And, thirdly, it seems impossible either to separate this first rider from those who follow, or, on the other hand, to place any advent of the Lord on the same level with plagues like war, famine, and pestilence; all four must in some sort represent judgements of God. This is also a serious objection to a second interpretation which is a refinement upon the first, viz. (2) that this rider represents not Christ himself, 'but only some symbol of his victorious power, the embodiment of his advancing kingdom as regards that side of its progress where it breaks down earthly power, and makes the kingdoms of the world to be the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ' (Alford, and so, practically,

3 And when he opened the second seal, I heard the  
 4 second living creature saying, Come. And another  
*horse* came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat  
 thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and  
 that they should slay one another: and there was given  
 unto him a great sword.

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Hilgenfeld). There seems to be no place here for a symbol of the victory of Christianity or the church. The other figures all suggest judgement—evil coming upon human society, and, accordingly, it will be best to see the same here. (3) The first rider represents conquest. The embodiment of evil force was, for this writer, the Roman Empire in all its extent and in all the manifestations of its power. Against this he predicts judgement in the coming of a conquering nation whose advent would be at least to the Roman dominion a judgement. That he had before his mind a particular nation as the instrument of judgement is at least probable; the emphatic mention of the 'bow' as 'the weapon of this rider would thus be explained; and without connecting the prediction with any particular battle or invasion, it is enough to know that all through the second half of the first century, and far beyond it, the possibility of a Parthian conquest of the West was in the minds of men. 'The apocalypticist predicts, in fact, a future victorious extension of the Parthian empire, and saw in that the first premonition of the end' (Bousset).

**3, 4. the second seal.** The rider on the red horse undoubtedly represents war in its aspect of slaughter; and here we find the writer taking up the predictions of our Lord himself as to the things that must needs come to pass before the end (Matt. xxiv. 3-8; Mark xiii. 7, 8). These things—wars and rumours of wars, famines and earthquakes—are 'the beginning of travail.' They are the birth-pangs out of which the new creation is to issue.

**4. to take peace:** *lit.* 'the peace.' This is not the peace established by the previous rider, but rather the known and cherished gift of peace which ideally belongs to men.

It is not possible, and it is quite unnecessary, for the understanding of the book, to identify this rider with any particular war, or those which follow with particular, historical cases of famine and pestilence. There is not a decennium in the first century in which one or other of these was not to be found in one or other of the provinces of the empire. The writer may, of course, have had before his mind definite historical occurrences, in which his anticipations seemed to find fulfilment; but if he had, it is no longer possible to identify them, and to

And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third **5**  
 living creature saying, Come. 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 **6**  
 midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of  
 wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a  
 penny; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not.

insist on some identification is to overlook the main point of his prediction, which is that these things (in this order) are those which must come before the end.

**5, 6. the third seal.** The third rider, who is mounted on a black horse, and holds scales in his hand, is evidently the representative of dearth or famine. The 'balance' is literally the beam from which the two scales are suspended. It is already a sign of scarcity that certain kinds of food are sold by weight; as in Lev. xxvi. 26, 'they shall deliver your bread again by weight; and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied'; cf. also Ezek. iv. 16. And that this is the meaning of this figure is further clear from the proclamation of the voice which seems to come, not from any one of the cherubim, but from somewhere in the centre of the four.

**6. A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny.** A 'penny' is the ridiculous translation retained, unfortunately, by our Revisers for a word representing about ten times the value of our penny. The denarius or dinar, which is thus translated, was worth about a franc ( $9\frac{1}{2}d.$  of our money), and was equivalent in Roman times to a labourer's wage for a day (see Matt. xx. 2ff.; Luke x. 35, the good Samaritan; John xii. 3, the value of the ointment). On the other hand, a 'measure' of corn was roughly the quantity required daily for each person's consumption; 'barley' being an inferior grain, a larger quantity would be required. The burden of the proclamation, therefore, is that a time of dearth is at hand in which the utmost that a man could earn would suffice to keep himself alone, a time of terrible scarcity and yet not of actual famine. According to a passage in Cicero the normal value of twelve 'measures' of wheat was a denarius, and of twelve 'measures' of barley half a denarius.

**the oil and the wine hurt thou not.** The severity of the dearth is further mitigated by this provision: the vines and the olive-trees were to be spared; terrible as this judgement is, it is not final. The mercy of God still tempers His judgement. 'By this third we learn that famine, the pressure of want on

7 And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a pale horse; and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

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men, not sweeping them away by utter failure of the means of subsistence, but keeping them far below the ordinary standard of comfort, and especially those who depend on their daily labour, will be one of the four judgements by which the Lord's way will be opened' (Alford).

**7, 8. the fourth seal.** The colour of the horse on which the fourth rider approaches is 'pale,' literally, 'greenish,' or 'livid,' the colour of a dead body. It corresponds, therefore, with the rider, who is 'death,' the personified source of the life-destroying forces enumerated below. And he is followed by 'Hades,' likewise a personification, viz. of the underworld, in which according to Hebrew conception all the dead were retained until the judgement. The two are similarly combined and personified in Isa. xxviii. 15, 'We have made a covenant with death, and with hell (Sheol) are we at agreement.' Cf. also Rev. i. 18, xx. 13, 14.

'Hades follows death. Death reaps, Hades garners: death reaps to sow, Hades garners to reproduce' (C. Rossetti).

**8. the fourth part of the earth.** There is no specific meaning to be attached to the fraction; it is suggested of course by the number of the riders, but it does not follow that to each of these was assigned a different quarter of the earth.

with sword, and with famine, and with death (marg. 'pestilence'), and by the wild beasts of the earth. Cf. Ezek. xiv. 21, where the 'four sore judgements' of God are 'the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beasts, and the pestilence.' The same series of plagues is denounced with more detail in Lev. xxvi. 22 ff. The combination of the three—sword, pestilence, and famine—is very frequent in the O. T.; cf. Jer. xxi. 7, li. 19; Ezek. v. 12. It is only a further effect of depopulation by war and pestilence that the wild beasts begin to possess the land.

'And so there grew great tracts of wilderness  
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,  
But man was less and less.'

TENNYSON.

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

**9-11. the fifth seal.** As in the letters to the seven churches, we found a group of four marked off from a group of three which followed, so with the seals; the opening of the first four leads to the appearance of the riders: the results of the next three are of a different character.

**9. underneath the altar.** There is no need to speculate as to which altar is meant, that of incense or of burnt offering: the imagery is not drawn from the earthly temple direct, but from previous visions such as that of Isaiah (vi. 6), where the prophet is aware of an altar in heaven. It is assumed as forming part of the scene in heaven which has been previously described. It is true that according to Exod. xxix. 12, the blood—and that signifies the life—of the victims was poured out at the foot of the altar of sacrifice; and the word 'slain' distinctly suggests, as in v. 6, 'slain in sacrifice'; but according to a tradition of later Judaism which is widely attested, it was not only the souls of 'martyrs,' but of all the righteous, which were kept, or 'buried,' under the altar which was before the throne of God. Thus in *Pirke Aboth* we have, 'Rabbi Akiba said: "whosoever is buried in the land of Israel, it is as if he were buried beneath the altar; but whosoever is buried beneath the altar, it is as if he were buried beneath the throne of glory."' Elsewhere in Rabbinic literature it is said, 'the souls of the just are below the throne of glory,' and 'God said unto the soul of Moses, "I will gather thee under the throne of my glory."'

**the souls of them that had been slain.** This and xx. 4 are the only passages in the N. T. where the word 'soul' is used to describe the disembodied dead (Acts ii. 27 being only an apparent exception). The ordinary word is 'spirits,' as in Heb. ii. 23; 1 Pet. iii. 19. 'Souls' signifies the immortal part of man viewed as life, and is probably used here because it was by the pouring out of their life to God that they came to be where they were.

**for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.** The phrase differs only by the omission of the closing words from that which has been used twice before. In i. 2 the writer describes himself as 'John, who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ'; and in i. 9 he says that he was 'in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.' In spite of the absence of the defining words at the end, the sense here must be the same as in the other passages; both clauses are objective; the

10 and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

'word' is the word given by God, the 'witness' is the witness borne by Jesus. That is to say, it is neither the witness borne by the martyrs to Christ, nor the witness borne to them by God, but the witness of Christ to God, which they 'had,' i. e. had received and preserved. Cf. John iii. 33, 'He that hath received his witness (R. V.) hath set his seal to this, that God is true': cf. also xx. 4. The phrase would seem to have been in some circles practically a technical term for that deposit of truth rather than deny which Christians were prepared to die.

10. **How long:** *lit.* 'until when?'; cf. Matt. xvii. 17; John x. 24; and especially Ps. xiii. 1, 2, lxii. 3, lxxix. 5, 'How long, O Lord, wilt thou be angry for ever?'

**O Master, the holy and true.** 'Master' for A. V. 'Lord' renders a word which, as applied to God, occurs only in two other passages in the N. T.—Luke ii. 29, in the *Nunc Dimittis*, and Acts iv. 24; it is applied to Christ in 2 Pet. ii. 1, 'Denying even the Master that bought them.' On 'true' see iii. 7 and note.

**dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?** Both the thought and the diction recall the tone of several of the Psalms. The appeal for judgement (cf. Ps. vii. 8, xxvi. 1) is primarily a plea for a decision in their case, and then for such a decision as will approve the righteous and openly confound the wicked. 'Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish thou the righteous' (Ps. vii. 9); 'Let the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed be known among the heathen in our sight' (Ps. lxxix. 10). For such judgement in the hands of a just power must necessarily issue in the 'avenging' of innocent blood. The two ideas lie together in the teaching of our Lord himself, especially in the Parable of the Importunate Widow (Luke xviii. 1-8), which furnishes in itself a curious parallel to this passage. See particularly Luke xviii. 7: 'And shall not God avenge his elect, which cry to him day and night, and he is longsuffering over them? I say unto you that he will avenge them speedily.' It is not necessary to dismiss this cry of the souls of the martyrs as breathing only the spirit of Judaism, or even as falling short of the temper that is specifically Christian, though it may not reach the level of ignoring personal wrongs and suffering which is set before us as an ideal by the Spirit of Christ. It must always remain a matter of the greatest difficulty for frail men to distinguish between legitimate zeal for the manifestation of God's righteousness and the desire to have their own sufferings

And there was given them to each one a white robe ; 11

in the cause of righteousness 'avenged,' to pursue the one and to suppress the other with equal intensity. And if we are to see here the reflection of the consciousness of the church at the time, we must remember that it was that of a martyr-church, into which we are hardly capable of entering, and at a period when, as now, there was much truth into which the Spirit had still to lead Christ's disciples.

**our blood.** In the earliest form of the thought it is the blood itself that is represented as calling out for vengeance: 'The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground' (Gen. iv. 10). In the *Book of Enoch* (xxii. 5) it is the 'soul' of Abel that cries out. 'I saw the soul (or, spirit) of a dead son of man wailing; and his voice penetrated to heaven, and wailed. Then I asked the angel Michael who was with me, and said unto him, "To whom does this mourning spirit belong?" And he answered me and said, "This spirit is that which went out from Abel."' There is another interesting parallel to this whole passage in the same book (xlvii. 2): 'In those days shall the Holy Ones, who dwell above in the heavens, with one voice intercede, pray, laud, thank and praise the name of the Lord of Spirits on account of the blood of the righteous and on account of the prayer of the righteous, that it may not be in vain before the Lord of Spirits, that the judgement may be performed for them, and its tarrying be not for ever.'

**11. And there was given them to each one a white robe.** The martyrs are of those who have 'overcome,' and to them the promise of iii. 4, 5 is already fulfilled; they receive the white robe of purity and victory. In the *Book of Enoch* (lxii. 15) the righteous and the chosen are clothed in 'a robe of glory,' or 'of life.' 'And this shall be your robe, a robe of life beside the Lord of Spirits; your robes shall not grow old, and your glory shall not pass away before the Lord of Spirits.'

Those who, like Dr. Milligan, take the souls under the altar to be 'the saints, not of Christianity, but of Judaism,' explain this robe as the bestowal on them of Christ's righteousness. 'At death they were not made perfect. They passed rather into a holy rest, where they waited until, like Abraham, who had "rejoiced that he should see Christ's day," they saw it and were glad. Then the white robe was given them. They were raised to the level of the church which, now that Jesus had come, rejoiced in him with a joy "unspeakable and glorified."'

But it was in the martyrs 'for the testimony' of Jesus that the church was interested, not in the martyrs of the Jewish church. It is to them that this robe is given, 'the vestment of acknowledged righteousness in which the saints walk and reign

and it was said unto them; that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled.

with Christ. Their prayer for vengeance was not yet granted. The Seer saw in vision that this was so. The white robe was not actually bestowed as some additional boon, but seemed in vision to be thus bestowed, because in that vision one side only of the martyrs' intermediate state had been presented, viz. the fact of their slaughter and collective cry for vengeance. Now, as over against that, the other more glorious side is presented, viz. that though the collective cry for vengeance is not yet answered, yet individually they are blessed in glory with Christ, and waiting for their fellows to be fully complete' (Alford). 'The martyrs receive the white robes at once as consolation and as pledge of the glory which is soon to be fulfilled.'

**that they should rest yet for a little time:** cf. xiv. 13, and Dan. xii. 13, 'go thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days.' Many good commentators take the rest to mean quiet or silence from calling out for vengeance; but both this and the implicit suggestion that they are to resume their cry as soon as the number of the martyrs is complete, seems hardly worthy of the scene. Better understand, as is suggested by the parallels, that they continue to rest in blessedness, or in the peace of the grave. Care must be taken not to draw hasty conclusions as to an 'intermediate state' from a passage such as this, where the vision-form makes it peculiarly difficult to distinguish between the fact and the imagery in which it is clothed. Such language, such modes of envisaging the future, may be a necessity for us who live and think in time; but they may be nothing more; they may not answer precisely to the facts of an existence which is outside time.

**until their fellow-servants also and their brethren . . . should be fulfilled.** The 'fellow-servants' and the 'brethren' are the same people viewed under the double aspect of their relation to God and their relation to the church. According to the correct reading (A. V. and R. V.) it is their number, a number fixed in the foreknowledge of God, which has to be completed. This idea is characteristic of the thought of later Judaism, as e. g. in the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (x. 30. 2): 'And it shall come to pass at that time the treasure-chambers shall be opened, in which the (appointed) number of souls of the righteous have been kept, and they shall go forth.' Cf. also 4 Esra iv. 36f. (Bousset). In modern language the underlying idea is that of the solidarity of

And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there <sup>12</sup> was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as

the church, of the church on earth with the church in heaven, so real that their experience of blessedness lacks something until our warfare too is accomplished. Cf. especially Heb. xi. 39: 'These all . . . received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.'

**which should be killed . . . as they were.** We have here an indication of the point of view from which the Apocalypse was written, looking back on persecution which had already claimed its victims of the sword, and looking forward to a persecution or persecutions which would surely add to their number. The book was written to unveil that future, but by unveiling at the same time a farther future, and the background of eternity, to strengthen the faith of the church to abide with patient endurance what the immediate future might bring.

**12. the sixth seal.** The opening of the sixth seal is to form the climax in the unveiling of future judgements according to the first cycle, that of the seals. The relation between this and the subsequent cycles, the trumpets and the bowls, has been discussed in the Introduction. According to the view there taken, each of the three cycles cover the whole period from the writer's own to 'the end'; and the sixth seal, like the sixth trumpet and the seventh bowl, is concerned with the things which immediately precede the end. This seems to be an inevitable conclusion from a comparison of this passage with the 'Little Apocalypse' of Matthew (xxiv, esp. 29-31; cf. Mark xiii): in Matt. xxiv. 6-13, the order is 'wars and rumours of wars,' famines, earthquakes, persecution, false prophets, 'and then shall the end come.' In the following section (15-28) our Lord elaborates the picture of the period of false prophets and persecution; and continues (verses 29, 30): 'Immediately, after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.' What is depicted here, therefore, as the result of the opening of the sixth seal, is the earthquake which more distantly, and the shaking of the powers of heaven which more immediately, precedes the end. What here is seen foreshortened is afterwards displayed in more complete perspective.

**a great earthquake.** The same phenomenon occurs as a sign of the approaching end in viii. 5, xi. 13, xvi. 18. It was part of the common anticipation of the things that should accompany the

sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood ;  
 13 and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig  
 tree casteth her unripe figs, when she is shaken of a  
 14 great wind. And the heaven was removed as a scroll  
 when it is rolled up ; and every mountain and island  
 15 were moved out of their places. And the kings of the  
 earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the

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manifestation of Divine power : cf. Heb. xii. 26, and the passage in Haggai (ii. 6, 7) there referred to. Cf. also the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (70. 8), where the same features are combined in a picture of the end : 'And every one who escapes out of the war shall die through an earthquake, and every one who escapes out of the earthquake will be burned in the fire ; and he who escapes out of the fire will be destroyed through hunger ; and all who escape from all these perils . . . they shall be entrusted to the hands of my servant, the Messiah.'

The details of the picture that follows are drawn from many passages in the O. T. In Isa. i. 3, 'I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering' ; in Amos viii. 9, 'I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day' ; in Isa. xiii. 10 ; Joel ii. 31 ; Ezek. xxxii. 7, as well as in the passages cited above from the Synoptists, we have this imagery used to describe a day of Divine judgement. Cf. also in the *Assumption of Moses*, x. 5 : 'The horns of the moon shall be broken, and the whole of it shall be turned into blood.'

13, 14. From Isa. xxxiv. 4 : 'And 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, as the leaf fadeth from off the vine, and as a fading leaf from the fig tree.' The 'unripe' figs are those which, never having ripened, are blown down by the first storm of spring. In 2 Pet. iii. 10 we read, 'the heavens shall pass away with a great noise,' and in the *Sibylline Oracles*, iii. 81, 'when God rolls up the heaven like as when the roll of a book is rolled up.'

14. every mountain and island were moved out of their places. This is repeated as part of the vision of the seventh bowl (xvi. 20) ; cf. Jer. iv. 24, and Nahum i. 5, 'The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt ; and the earth is upheaved at his presence, yea, the world and all that dwell therein.' Cf. also Matt. xxiv. 35.

15. the princes. The word so translated, which occurs again in xviii. 23 (cf. Mark vi. 21), is said by Mommsen to be the name

rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the 16 rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able 17 to stand?

of a Parthian dignity: it is combined here, as in Mark, with a word 'chiliarchs,' which is characteristically Greek; the two together cover 'civil and military authorities.' The enumeration selects first those who by position might think themselves most secure, then those who by possession of strength or riches might seem lifted above catastrophe, but concludes by an all-embracing phrase, 'every bondman and freeman.'

**hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains.** From Isa. ii. 10 (cf. 19, 20): 'Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, from before the terror of the Lord, and from the glory of his majesty.' 'Men shall go into the caves of the rocks, and into the holes of the earth.'

**16. Fall on us.** So Luke xxiii. 30: 'Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us,' where our Lord himself appears to be quoting from Hos. x. 8.

**and hide us from the face:** cf. Ps. xxxiv. 16, 'The face of the Lord is against them that do evil,' and Nahum i. 6; Mal. iii. 2.

**and from the wrath of the Lamb.** Once more an attribute which is specially characteristic of the Most High, and that particularly in this connexion, viz. the day of the Lord, is transferred to the figure of Christ (cf. Jer. xxi. 5; Zech. vii. 12; Rom. i. 18); and the impression made by the phrase is all the greater because of the incongruity between 'wrath' and the natural disposition of a 'Lamb.' God and Christ are identified, as in their love towards mankind, so in their anger against those who 'go on still in their iniquity.'

**17. for the great day of their wrath is come.** It is difficult to decide whether we should read 'their' or 'his'; but, seeing that it is easier to understand the correction of 'his' to 'their' than the converse, it is probably best to keep the reading of A. V. 'the great day (*dies iræ, dies illa*) of his wrath.'

The 'day of the Lord' had been, even in the time of Amos (ii. 4), an idea well known to the people for a very long time. It is here transferred from the end of the Jewish to the end of the Christian dispensation, and the terrible wonders which

## 7 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners

had been associated with it by the prophets are collected together here so as to make a picture of peculiar impressiveness. But the details of the picture are not to be too closely examined as though a special significance were concealed in each: it is the picture as a whole which claims attention, a picture of great natural catastrophes preceding the end, and creating the most hopeless terror among the inhabitants of the earth.

'Highly coloured as the language used under the sixth seal may appear to us, to the Jew animated by the spirit of the O. T. it was simply that in which he had been accustomed to express his expectation of any new dispensation of the Almighty, of any striking crisis in the history of the world. Whenever he thought of the Judge of all the earth as manifesting himself in a greater than ordinary degree, and as manifesting himself in that truth and righteousness which was the glorious distinction of his character, he took advantage of such figures as we have now before us. To the fall of Jerusalem, therefore, to every great crisis in human history, and to the close of all, they may be fittingly applied' (Milligan).

## vii. FIRST PARENTHESIS: TWO VISIONS OF THE REDEEMED.

At this point in the book we are met for the first time by a feature in its construction which is both important and perplexing. Instead of passing directly from the sixth seal to the seventh, as he has done from one to other of the preceding ones, the writer interposes here a section which appears to be independent of the seal-cycle, and to break the continuity of the revelation. In like manner, between the sixth trumpet and the seventh, we shall find a considerable section introduced (x. 1-xi. 14), which seems to break the continuity. There have been many different explanations of this phenomenon (see Introduction, §§ 9, 11). The one adopted here is that all these various sections were put where we find them by one and the same writer, whom we call the Author of the Apocalypse; that some of them were already either in form or in substance part of the apocalyptic tradition with which he worked, material, some of it of Jewish origin, which he incorporated in his Christian view of the future.

These visions find their place here inasmuch as they are calculated to sustain the courage and confidence of the redeemed at the point which has now been reached. The contents of the seventh seal are still unknown; the six that have been opened have predicted an ever-widening sweep of judgement; at this

point assurance is to be given in the most solemn way concerning God's redeemed, that they are to be secure from the plagues and judgements which are to befall the world. 'It is the manner,' says Dr. Milligan, 'of the apocalyptic writer, before any final or particularly critical manifestation of the wrath of God, to present us with visions of consolation, so that we may enter into the thickest darkness, even into the valley of the shadow of death, without alarm.'

The seventh chapter is marked off from the foregoing, and also itself divided into two well-marked sections by the phrase, 'after these things I beheld,' occurring both in verse 1 and in verse 9, by which the writer is accustomed to mark the larger breaks in his work. The suggestion thus arises that in this chapter we have two distinct visions, and this is confirmed by an examination of its contents. With the same general purpose in view, viz. to give solemn assurance of the security of the redeemed, the two parts present marked distinctions. In the first, great emphasis is laid upon the fixed, though it may be symbolical, number of the sealed; in the second, even greater emphasis is laid on the fact that the redeemed cannot be numbered. In the first they are 'of all the tribes of the children of Israel,' and this limitation is further insisted on by their being distributed among the several tribes which make up that whole; in the second every effort is made to assert the removal of any such national limitation. And once more the sealed in the first are sealed against, or with a view to, coming tribulation, while in the second the vision is of those who have already 'come out of great tribulation.' Moreover, the relation to God of those qualified to be sealed is expressed in terms of the old Covenant as that of servants or 'bondsmen,' whereas the relation of the redeemed in the second vision to God is traced to the cleansing efficacy of the blood of the Lamb. In a word, the first section of this chapter is penetrated by the spirit of the O. T., the second by the thought of the N. T. The most probable explanation seems to be that the writer is here quoting from some Jewish apocalypse in which the Jewish anticipation of the final deliverance is described, while in the second vision he carries on the anticipation to its Christian fulfilment on a vaster scale, and through the conditions revealed in Christ.

Confirmation of this suggested origin for verses 1-8 is found in the remarkable fact that in the list of tribes contained in verses 5-8 there is no mention of the tribe of Dan. Various explanations have been given of this omission, as e.g. that the tribe had died out (but so had others besides Dan), that it is because Dan early fell away into idolatry (but again this would not distinguish it from all the other tribes); but the only plausible explanation remains that suggested by Irenæus, viz. that 'this tribe is not reckoned with those that are saved in the Apocalypse,' because

of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree. And I saw another angel ascend from the sunrising, having the seal of the living God: and

of the tradition that Antichrist was to be born of Dan, as the Messiah of the tribe of Judah. The tradition may have had its source in Gen. xlix. 17 (cf. Jer. viii. 16, and the omission of the same tribe from 1 Chron. iv-vii). Bousset (*Der Antichrist*, p. 114) thinks that traces of the same tradition are to be found in the *Testament of the XII Patriarchs* ('Dan'). But if this explanation be correct, and it was the one commonly accepted by patristic commentators, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that vii. 1-8 is a fragment of Jewish apocalypse incorporated by the Christian writer.

vii. 1-8. *The sealing of the Twelve Tribes.*

1. **I saw four angels.** 'Not, as many interpreters, bad angels, nor does it necessarily follow that we are to adopt the analogy of xvi. 5 and to regard them as "angels of the winds"; but simply angels to whom this office is committed. All allegorizing and all individualizing interpretations are out of the question' (Alford).

**the four corners of the earth:** i. e. the four cardinal points. The earth is doubtless conceived of as a flat surface. The Hebrews thought of the world as a disk (cf. Isa. xl. 22): see Whitehouse's art. 'Cosmogony' in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, with the diagram. The 'corners' must not be pressed to suggest that the shape was a rectangle.

**holding the four winds.** The meaning is that they were holding back the winds that they should not break forth in destructive force until an appointed time. It is to be noted, however, that we hear no more of these angels or of the loosening of the winds.

For the 'four' winds cf. Zech. vi. 5 and Jer. xlix. 36: 'And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven'; Dan. vii. 2, xi. 4.

2. **I saw another angel.** Again this is simply the angel to whom this duty was committed, and neither our Lord nor the Holy Spirit.

**ascend from the sunrising.** This rendering (R. V.) gives the clue to the thought that like the sun this angel comes with light and hope. Cf. Ezek. xliii. 2, 'And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east.'

**the living God:** cf. Ps. xlii. 3, 9; Jer. x. 10, xxiii. 36; Hos. i. 10.

he cried with a great voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

to hurt: as in vi. 6, ix. 4.

till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. With the whole passage should be compared Matt. xxiv. 31: 'And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.' There appear to be three kinds of significance attached to 'sealing' in the Scriptures. Its purpose may be (1) to authenticate, as in John vi. 27 (cf. John iii. 33; 1 Kings xi. 8); (2) to assert ownership, to claim possession, as in the branding of slaves, captives, or cattle; this is the reference in Isa. iii. 24, 'branding' for 'burning,' and metaphorically, in 2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 13, iv. 30 (cf. Rom. xv. 28); (3) to assure safety, on the ground of this ownership, in which case the seal becomes a protective mark; this idea is illustrated by the blood-marks on the lintel protecting the Hebrew house from the angel of death (Exod. xii. 23), and more closely, by the passage in Ezek. ix. 4-6: 'But come not near any man upon whom is the mark.' The significance of the sealing in Revelation seems to combine both the latter ideas (cf. ix. 4, xiii. 6, xiv. 1, 9, 11, xix. 20, xx. 4, xxii. 4); when it is the redeemed of God who are sealed, it is to mark them as in His possession, and under His protection.

Already in the O. T. we find a few indications of such protective marks. The mark put upon Cain may have had this significance, and in Isa. xlv. 51; Lev. xix. 27f., xxi. 5f.; Deut. xiv. 1f., there is likewise implied an acquaintance with sacred signs by which the bearer indicates that he belongs to a certain deity; were the Israelites to permit of the sign of another God among them, they would thereby rupture their special relation to God as His people. Further illustrations are found in *Ps. Sol.* xv. 6: 'for the sign of God is upon the righteous unto salvation'; according to 3 Macc. ii. 29, the Alexandrian Jews were compelled by Ptolemy IV, Philopator, to have branded upon them an ivy leaf, the sign of Dionysus; Philo reproaches the Jewish apostates for allowing themselves to be branded with the signs of idols made with hands; finally, the Tephillin, prayer-fillets, were regarded as protective marks, and were designated 'phylacteries,' the technical term for amulets. See Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, p. 350f., from which this note is abridged. No indication is given as to the mark or inscription on the seal; probably it was the

- 4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel.
- 5 Of the tribe of Judah *were* sealed twelve thousand :  
Of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand :  
Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand :
- 6 Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand :  
Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand :  
Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand :
- 7 Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand :  
Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand :

name of God ; cf. iii. 12 and ii. 17. ' Such a seal, manifest to the eyes of all, was a witness to all that they who bore it were acknowledged by the Redeemer before all, even before his Father and the holy angels.'

4. The actual sealing is not described ; neither does the Seer appear to behold the assembly of those who are thus sealed ; contrast verse 9.

**a hundred and forty and four thousand.** The number, being based upon the square of twelve, itself one of the typical numbers of completeness, is evidently a symbolical one ; ' no one that I am aware of has taken it literally, and supposed that just this particular number and no more is imported. The import for us is that the Lord knoweth and sealeth his own ; that the fullness of their number shall be accomplished, and not one shall fail' (Alford).

**out of every tribe of the children of Israel.** Those who do not see in the first half of this chapter a quotation from a Jewish source have the greatest difficulty in explaining these words. Are they to be taken literally, of Israel 'according to the flesh,' or spiritually, of Israel 'according to faith,' the Christian church? If literally, why is the number in the case of Israel so definitely limited, and in the other so emphatically unlimited? What is the difference between the sealing of the one class and the redemption of the other? But if spiritually, so that both visions refer to members of Christ's church, then again, what is the relation between the two visions, and how are we to account for the distribution of the whole number among the Twelve Tribes, to which there is nothing corresponding in the church?

5-7. This enumeration of the tribes is remarkable for several reasons : (1) Dan is omitted (see above on verse 1) ; (2) ' Joseph'

Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand :

Of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand :

8

Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand :

Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.

After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude; 9

appears instead of Ephraim; (3) Levi is included; (4) the order in which the tribes are mentioned seems to follow no ascertainable principle. Cf. the lists in Num. xiii. 5; Deut. xxxiii; 1 Chron. iv-vii; and see Buchanan Gray, *Expositor* (1902), p. 225 ff.

'We must assume that here also the "sealed" stand for the Jewish believers, who maintain their faithfulness in the struggle with Antichrist, and are saved. Even the earlier exegetes know of this combination and explain the 144,000 of believing Jewish Christians, who are to be converted at the preaching of Elias at the end of the days, and to take up the conflict with Antichrist' (Bousset).

vii. 9-17. *The vision of the great multitude of the redeemed.* As was pointed out above, there is a deep difference between this vision and the foregoing. We are conscious of a sudden expansion of the horizon, and this is due not so much to any change of subject as to a change in the treatment of the same subject, a change in the tone and atmosphere. Here the redeemed are a great multitude, the special characteristic of which is that it cannot be numbered; here they are gathered out of 'all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues.' The writer seems to rejoice in heaping up words to shew that every barrier of race has disappeared. In the former part it is at least suggested that the condition of being sealed is found in abiding in union with the chosen people. Here those who serve God day and night in the temple do so on the ground that they have washed their robes 'in the blood of the Lamb.' It would indeed be difficult to exaggerate the difference between the two parts of the chapter, and yet they are not contradictory. The one grows out of the other; and the whole might be described as a supreme illustration of the difference that Christ has made. The first eight verses of this chapter may have formed part of some apocalyptic work with which John had been familiar; their contents would certainly be part of the religious furnishing of his mind, as a Jew, of the time of Christ. To him as a Christian, then, even to him writing under the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ, they seemed to be still valid, important, it may be essential, to a complete presenta-

which no man could number, out of every nation, and of *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and *about* the

tion of the future; so he has incorporated them in his Apocalypse. But then the larger view bursts upon him, the kingdom of heaven open not only to those who are in some sense connected with Israel, but 'to all believers.' The earlier and more limited expectation of the future becomes merely a platform from which the Seer is swept off to contemplate and describe the purpose of God larger than the Jews had known, a purpose that included all nations and kindreds and peoples.

**9. which no man could number.** Cf. *Book of Enoch*, xl. 1: 'And after that I saw thousands of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand, a multitude beyond number and reckoning, who stood before the Lord of spirits.'

**out of every nation:** cf. v. 9, and note.

**before the throne and before the Lamb.** The scene remains the same as before in all its features, only this 'great cloud' of redeemed saints now becomes visible to the Seer's quickened sight.

**arrayed in white robes** (cf. iii. 5, vi. 11), **and palms in their hands** (cf. John xii. 13). The carrying of palm-branches may be explained as a symbol of festal joy, as at the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem, or as the symbol of victory. Taken in connexion with the white robes, it is probably the latter. Deissmann (*Bible Studies*, p. 358 f.) suggests that the imagery is drawn from the religious processions in the neighbourhood of Ephesus, in which those who took part walked 'clothed in white and crowned with a bough and holding a bough in their hands.' But there is no need to look for any special source of images which have been so universally connected with joy and triumph.

**10. Salvation unto our God:** cf. xix. 1; Ps. iii. 8. Originally bearing the specific sense of deliverance from the enemy, the word 'salvation' acquired a larger and a positive meaning when it was used to designate the complete Messianic victory, of which that deliverance was a part. To ascribe 'salvation' to God, therefore, is to ascribe to Him the highest and final victory.

**11.** As in v. 11, the angels take up the song which has been commenced by others. They make their own the praise, which

elders and the four living creatures ; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, 12 Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders 13 answered, saying unto me, These which are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he 14 said to me, These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they 15

has been already rendered, with their 'Amen' (cf. 1 Cor. xiv. 16), and then expand it into a song of their own.

**12.** Here, as in v. 13, the ascription is one of sevenfold praise.

**13. one of the elders.** See note on iv. 4; it is in harmony with the whole method of the book that the interpreter of the vision should be not a representative, even a glorified one, of the earthly church, but one of the heavenly powers.

This is 'a celestial model of catechetical instruction; the question being propounded for the sake of the learner, not apparently of the asker' (C. Rossetti).

**14. My lord.** The tone is one of deep reverence, consistent with a most exalted rank in the one addressed. Cf. Dan. x. 16, 17; Zech. iv. 5, 13.

**thou knowest:** i. e. I do not know, but would learn from thee; cf. Ezek. xxxvii. 3.

**These are they which come out of the great tribulation.** Observe the variations from A. V. It is not merely, in the first instance at least, out of the great tribulations of life that these do come, but out of some conspicuous and well-defined experience of suffering, some period of unusually severe persecution. It is possible, but not probable, that the period referred to is already passed for the Seer; more likely that it is still in the future, 'the great tribulation' foretold by our Lord (Matt. xxiv. 21), the time of martyrdom in which the number of martyred saints was to be fulfilled; cf. vi. 11.

Others, however, take the reference to be a more general one, to 'all that tribulation' which befalls the Christian church in its struggle with the world.

**and they washed their robes** (i. 5, and note), **and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.** There is no necessity,

before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall

with Hengstenberg and others, to distinguish the two clauses as describing successive stages in the process of salvation, as e.g. forgiveness and sanctification; the double phrase serves to describe one experience with great emphasis, 'they washed them, and by doing so made them white.' But what is the experience referred to? Is it the spiritual cleansing which is bestowed upon all Christians through their faith in the sacrifice of Christ (cf. 1 John i. 7, 'The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin'; also Acts xv. 9)? Or is it the specific experience of martyrdom, leading to the clothing in the white robes of victory? The answer will depend largely on the interpretation we give to 'the great tribulation': but the latter explanation seems to be more in harmony with the spirit of this book, with its predominating interest in the case of those who are to suffer martyrdom, as also with the imagery of the white robes, which appears commonly to refer to the martyr-triumph. In this case the 'blood of the Lamb' would be the instrumental cause of their victory, and so of their making white their robes; cf. xii. 11, 'They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb.'

**15. before the throne of God:** in His presence, 'where is fulness of joy,' taking their place along with and among the heavenly and angelic powers who worship Him from all eternity.

**they serve him.** So in xxii. 3, 'His servants shall do him service.' The word has special reference to the service of the sanctuary, the ministry of worship. Milton was giving, not its secondary, but its primary sense, when he wrote, 'they also serve who only stand and wait.'

**his temple.** The heavenly temple, 'not made with hands,' is the condition localized of those who see God and serve Him with unclouded vision and undivided love.

**shall spread his tabernacle over them:** for the A. V. 'shall dwell among them.' The word is the same as that used in John i. 14, 'The Word . . . dwelt (R.V. marg. 'tabernacled') among us'; cf. also xxi. 3. It is connected by sound, though not otherwise, with the Hebrew word for the overshadowing Presence of God-Schechinah; and the thought should be traced back to the promise in Lev. xxvi. 11, Ezek. xxxvii. 27, with its symbolic manifestation in the 'cloud upon the mercy-seat,' Lev. xvi. 2; Ezek. x. 3, 4.

**16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.**

the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

From Isa. xlix. 10, 'They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them'; cf. also Ps. cxxi. 6. The primary reference in the word 'heat,' as used by Isaiah, is to the scorching, suffocating wind known as the 'sirocco.'

**17. in the midst of the throne.** Though the preposition is different, the sense is the same as in v. 6; the Lamb is not on the throne, but at the middle point in the front of it.

**shall be their shepherd.** So R. V. for A. V. 'shall feed them'; cf. ii. 27. The word means literally, 'shall shepherd them,' which includes of course both the finding of pasture for them and guiding or controlling their movements. It is used in John xxi. 16, in our Lord's address to Peter, 'shepherd my sheep.' The figure of the shepherd, so familiar in the O. T. as a description of God in His relation to His people (Ps. xxiii. 1 f.; Isa. xl. 11), is transferred to Christ, as it had been claimed by Jesus himself (John x. 11-16).

**unto fountains of waters of life.** This rendering is more literal than that of the A. V.; still more literally we might render, 'unto life's water-springs'; the emphasis is strongly on the word 'life.' In xxii. 1 the water of life is as a river 'proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.' In comparison with the passage in Isaiah ('even by the springs of water shall he guide them') the thought has taken a more distinctly spiritual meaning: the middle term will be found in the teaching of Jesus; cf. John iv. 14, 'The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life'; also vii. 38.

**God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.** This promise, which is repeated in xxi. 4, is found in Isa. xxv. 8, 'And the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.'

The value of these two consolatory visions is seen in their effect: they not only break the crushing monotony of anticipated judgement, but they reveal the absolute truth of the situation, in which God's judgement is eternally linked with mercy. The justice that compels Him to take vengeance upon sin never impinges upon the faithfulness with which He maintains His saving grace towards them that believe. Sustained by such assurance, therefore, these can go on to face the culmination of judgement, which still lies in the future, with the tranquillity of faith.

- 8 And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.
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viii. THE SEVENTH SEAL LEADING TO THE FIRST SIX TRUMPETS.

viii. 1-6. *The Seventh Seal.* The immediate effect of the breaking of the Seventh Seal is 'silence in heaven,' during which deliberate and solemn preparation is made for the next cycle of judgements, following on the blowing of the Trumpets. Impressive as this is, it is hardly what we should have expected to find as the result of the opening of the Seal which is the climax of its cycle, and has been further led up to by the foregoing visions of consolation. 'Its contents have not the significance which we seem entitled to expect. It is the last Seal of its own series, and when we turn to the last member of the Trumpet series at xi. 15, or of the Bowl series at xvi. 17, we find them marked, not by less, but by much greater, force than had belonged in either case to the six preceding members. The seventh Trumpet and the seventh Bowl sum up and concentrate the contents of their predecessors' (Milligan). When it is further observed that the main result of the opening of this last Seal is to lead to preparation for the Trumpets, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that its complete results are inclusive of the Trumpet series itself. The contents of this seventh judgement are not exhausted until xi. 15 is reached, if indeed they may not be said to extend to the end of the Bowl series at xvi. 17. On the relation of the three cycles see further in Introduction, p. 69.

1. **there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.** No satisfactory explanation of the length of the silence can be given, which attempts to take the half-hour literally. An hour stands for a completed portion of time; half an hour for a broken and indefinite period. It suggests the wistful or alarmed uncertainty with which the end of the silence was awaited, especially by the Seer. The silence big with fate conveys, as nothing else could, the sense of trembling suspense; the 'lightnings and voices and thunders' ceased; even the music and the praises of heaven ceased; the whole innumerable multitude of heavenly beings were intent to see what should come—would it be the end? The judgements of God, down to that which shall prove the final one, are always at once complete and incomplete: they make an end, but they also mark a beginning. And there are times in history, taken on every scale, from that of the individual man to that of the whole world, when men and nations, groups of God's people or the church at large, hold their breath, as it were, to watch for the bursting forth of new judgement.

2. **the seven angels which stand before God.** By these are

And I saw the seven angels which stand before God; 2 and there were given unto them seven trumpets.

And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him 3

meant not merely the angels who happened to be standing before the throne, but the seven who, according to later Jewish ideas, were distinguished above the rest and occupied that position as of right. This differentiation of the seven shews its earliest trace in Ezek. ix. 2, where the 'men' are angelic beings; it appears clearly in Tobit xii. 15, '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.' The conception finds expression under different forms in this book, e. g. probably in 'the seven spirits which are before his throne' (i. 4); in the seven eyes of the Lamb (v. 6); and possibly in the seven torches of fire 'burning before the throne' (iv. 5). See note on i. 4.

**seven trumpets.** For the trumpet in connexion with judgment cf. 1 Cor. xv. 52; Isa. xxvii. 13.

**3. another angel.** There is no reason (except a supposed doctrinal difficulty) for understanding anything else than the simple meaning of the words; this may be another of the seven angels, but it is an angel and nothing more.

**stood over** (or 'at') **the altar, having a golden censer.** Though the word translated 'censer' commonly means 'incense' (1 Chron. ix. 29), it must plainly be understood here of a receptacle, the 'firepan' of Exod. xxxviii. 3 ('copper'), 1 Kings vii. 50 ('gold'). On the hot coals which it contained the incense was sprinkled, according to the directions in Lev. xvi. 12; cf. Num. xvi. 46. The writer appears to have two altars before his view: the first, over which the angel stands, corresponding to the altar of burnt offering which stood before the Holy Place; the other to the altar of incense within the Holy Place, which according to Num. iv. 11 was also 'golden.' In other words, the scene in which this vision is set is slightly different from that described in chap. iv; there the imagery corresponds to the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, here to the arrangements of the earthly temple. No difficulty need be felt in this; the 'patterns of things in the heavens' take the place of 'the heavenly things themselves' for the moment. But it is an indication of the apocalyptic manner, which resists the attempt to enforce upon it any continuously self-consistent scheme. It is still the heavenly temple in which the visions have their setting, although the writer describes its furniture in terms of the earthly sanctuary.

**and there was given unto him:** that is, by some one appointed to do so, not 'by the saints who offered the prayers.'

much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before  
4 the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the  
5 angel's hand. And the angel taketh the censer; and

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'It is a frequent apocalyptic formula in reference to those things or instruments with which the ministrations necessary to the progress of the visions are performed.'

that he should add (marg. 'give') it unto the prayers of all the saints. The figure is somewhat different from that in verse 8, where the 'odours' are 'the prayers of the saints.' The function of the angels in offering, assisting, or supporting the prayers of men is a feature belonging to later Jewish tradition. A trace of such mediation may possibly be found in Zech. i. 12; in Tobit (xii. 12) Raphael says to Tobit, 'And now, when thou didst pray . . . I did bring the memorial of your prayer before the Holy One.' In the *Book of Enoch* (ix. 3 ff., &c.) the angels or archangels are found interceding for human affairs. The reality to which this scene corresponds is not, however, the necessity or even the value of angelic intercession, but the concurrence of the Divine will with the human petitions. These prayers are made 'in an acceptable time'; cf. Isa. xlix. 8; Ps. lxxix. 13; 2 Cor. vi. 2. As Alford puts it: 'The incense imports here, we may perhaps say, acceptability owing to the ripeness of the season in the Divine purposes, so that the prayers, lying unanswered before, become, by the fullness of the time, acceptable as regards an immediate reply.' No one will be misled by such passages who bears in mind (1) that the angels are not glorified men, but personifications of the attributes, or purposes, or activities of God as they go forth towards mankind, and (2) that 'there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.'

The prayers are those of 'all saints,' that is to say, not of the martyrs only (cf. v. 10), but of the whole church.

4. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up. More literally, 'And there went up the smoke of the incense for the prayers of the saints,' i.e. 'for their benefit,' 'on their behalf.' The meaning is the same as in the previous verse; the aspirations of heaven, which are the will of God, coincided with the prayers of earth; these prayers, therefore, were about to be answered.

5. The angel takes the censer, having used it as above, and replenishes it again from the 'live coals from off the altar'; then casts it, that is, the burning embers with which it was filled, down from heaven on to (*lit.* 'into') the earth. In Ezek. x. 2 we find

he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

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

And the first sounded, and there followed hail and 7 fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth was burnt up,

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the command given to the 'man (= 'angel') clothed in linen' to 'fill both his hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city.' The purpose is the same here, to signify that, in answer to the prayers of His suffering people, the fire of God is about to descend in vengeance on the earth.

The silence is broken by thunders and voices, to which are added lightnings (as in iv. 5), and also earthquake (as in xi. 19, xvi. 18). These are the 'symbolic precursors' of the judgements which are about to follow.

6. The angels put their trumpets to their lips, ready to sound.

#### viii. 7—ix. 21. THE FIRST SIX TRUMPETS.

Like the Seals, the Trumpets fall into two groups of four and three. The first four affect various portions of nature, the vegetation, the sea, the rivers, and the luminaries of the sky. The last three, which are further distinguished as Woes, affect mankind. 'We may fairly say that the plagues of the four former trumpets affect the accessories of life; whereas those of the last two affect life itself, the former by the infliction of pain, the latter of death' (Alford). There is, moreover, an evident correspondence, which cannot be overlooked, between these Trumpet-Plagues (and also those which proceed from the Bowls) and the 'Plagues of Egypt.' The order is not the same, and four of course are wanting (the 'lice,' the 'flies,' the 'murrain,' and the death of the firstborn).

##### viii. 7. *The first Trumpet.*

**7. hail and fire, mingled with blood.** Cf. Exod. ix. 24, 'So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail'; Ps. xviii. 12, 13. In the *Sibylline Oracles* (v. 377) we find a like prophecy: 'For fire shall rain from the heavenly regions upon men, fire and blood.'

The phrase, **the third part of the earth**, is introduced into the R. V. on the authority of the best MSS. Like the phrase 'for the space of half an hour' in the preceding chapter, it is not to be interpreted in any literal sense, but as indicating that this judgement, terrible and destructive as it is, is still only a partial

and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and  
9 the third part of the sea became blood; and there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, *even* they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed.

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon

one—more of the earth escapes than is destroyed. The same consideration will apply in similar cases which follow both in this chapter and in ix. 15, 18. This use of fractions to express relative proportion rather than absolute quantities may be illustrated from Zech. xiii. 8, 9, 'And it shall come to pass that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third part shall be left therein'; cf. also Ezek. v. 2. No explanation can be given of the whole of the grass being destroyed, while two-thirds of the trees escape.

viii. 8-9. *The Second Trumpet.*

**8. as it were a great mountain:** that is, not a great mountain, but a burning mass, in size like unto a mountain. The phrasing is similar to that in Luke xxii. 44, where 'the words do not necessarily mean more than that the drops of sweat in some way resembled drops of blood, e.g. by their size and frequency' (Plummer). In the imagery of the mountain there may be a reminiscence of the difficult verses in Jer. li. 25, 'I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth.'

**the third part.** See above on v. 7.

**became blood.** So in xvi. 3, after the pouring of the third Bowl, the sea 'became as the blood of a dead man.' Both judgements correspond to the first of the Egyptian Plagues: 'all the waters that were in the river were turned into blood'; cf. Exod. vii. 17-21. And, as there, 'the fish that were in the river died,' so here, 'there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea.'

viii. 10-11. *The Third Trumpet.*

**10. a great star.** There is no parallel here with the 'day star, son of the morning,' which Isaiah addresses (xiv. 12) as 'fallen from heaven': the image is that of a natural star.

the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Worm-<sup>11</sup> wood: and the third part of the waters became worm-wood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of<sup>12</sup> the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner.

**11. and the name of the star is called Wormwood.** The name in Greek is that from which we get, by transliteration, the word 'absinth'; wormwood is not known to be poisonous, and even in Jer. ix. 14, xxiii. 15, it is not associated with fatal results. These follow, in this case, from the fact that all the water available for 'many of mankind' is impregnated with the bitter wood. The converse effect of making bitter waters sweet is produced in Exod. xv. 25 by the casting of a tree into the water. Alford's remark on this judgement is worth transcribing. 'It is hardly possible to read of this third plague and not to think of the deadly effect of those strong spirituous drinks which are in fact water turned into poison. The very name "absinthe" is not unknown in their nomenclature: and there is no effect which could be so aptly described by the falling of fire into water, as this, which results in ardent spirit, in that which the simple islanders of the South Sea call "firewater." That this plague may go on to destroy even this fearful proportion of the ungodly in the latter days is far from impossible, considering its prevalence even now in some parts of the civilized world.'

viii. 12. *The Fourth Trumpet.* No intermediate cause is specified between the blowing of this trumpet and the falling of the judgement. The darkness, which follows also on the pouring of the fifth Bowl, corresponds with the ninth of the Egyptian Plagues (Exod. x. 21-23). It is described in a highly metaphorical manner, so that it is not easy to get a clear conception of the writer's meaning, beyond this that a considerable portion of the light of sun, moon, and stars is cut off, with the result that the light of day from the sun, and of night from the moon, are both limited to the same extent.

- 13 And I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound.
- 9 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

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viii. 13. *Transition to the Three Woes—the last three trumpets.*

**13. an eagle.** So R. V. rightly for A. V. 'an angel.' Once more this is to be understood literally, the strangeness of the image being part of the apocalyptic style, and not greater than that of the burning mountain or the falling star. An eagle swooping upon his prey is a symbol of judgement in Hos. viii. 1 (cf. Hab. i. 8, 'They fly as an eagle that hasteth to devour'); and in the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (lxxvii. 19-22) the Seer sends forth an eagle to carry his letter.

**in mid heaven:** for A. V. 'through the midst of heaven'; the word, which occurs again in xiv. 6, xix. 17, stands for the zenith, or the meridian. Flying there, the eagle is 'seen and heard of all.'

The thrice-repeated 'Woe' answers to the threefold judgement which is about to follow, although only the first and the second of these are described expressly as such (ix. 12, xi. 14).

ix. 1-12. *The Fifth Trumpet; the First Woe.*

**1. a star from heaven fallen unto the earth.** This star plainly differs from the one referred to in viii. 10, inasmuch as it is represented as receiving the key and opening the abyss; we have here, therefore, a personification. That it is a 'fallen angel,' in the technical sense, we have no reason to assume, seeing that it is not to other angels of that class that the carrying out of the judgements is committed. This star is 'fallen,' simply because a star upon earth could not be thought of except as fallen from heaven. Bousset points out that, in the *Book of Enoch*, stars which have fallen from heaven appear in animal (lxxxvi. 1) and (lxxxviii. 1) in human form. Thus: 'Moreover, I saw with my eyes, while I slept, and I saw the heaven above, and behold a star fell down from heaven, and when it arose, it fed and browsed among those oxen.' The undoubted reference to Isa. xiv. 12 and Luke x. 18, occurs first in xii. 9.

**the key of the pit of the abyss.** So R. V. in correction of A. V. 'of the bottomless pit.' The three conceptions of the 'abyss,' the 'pit,' or shaft that leads to it, and the 'key' by which the entrance to the pit is locked, are all traceable in

the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And out of the smoke came forth locusts 3

later Jewish thought. The word 'abyss,' meaning literally 'bottomless,' is used many times in the LXX to render the Hebrew word which signifies 'tumultuous water-deep,' and specially the 'waters beneath,' by which the earth was at first covered (Gen. i. 2; Ps. civ. 6-9), but on which it was afterwards made to rest. This word came to be used, in a secondary sense, of the place of the dead, conceived of as beneath the earth, as in Ps. lxxi. 20, 'Thou . . . shalt quicken us again, and shalt bring us up again from the depths (Greek, 'from the abysses') of the earth.' So in Rom. x. 7 it signifies 'the abode of the dead.' 'The relation to Sheol, with its dull, shadowy monotony and even misery, coupled with the Old Testament idea of Sheol as a pit-dungeon (Isa. xxiv. 22) and with pre-New Testament apocalyptic usage (*Enoch*, x. 13, "chasm of fire"; xxi. 10, "prison of the angels"), prepared for the New Testament use of the word' (see Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, articles 'Abyss' and 'Cosmogony'). In the development of the doctrine of the other world 'abyss' came to stand specially for the abode of the powers of evil (cf. xi. 7, xvii. 8).

The word translated 'pit' means literally, 'well,' and describes the shaft by which there was supposed to be communication between the upper and the under worlds. According to Rabbinic tradition the opening of this shaft was asserted to be below the foundation-stone of the temple. The idea of the closing and the locking of the entrance is found in the Prayer of Manasses (verse 3), 'O Lord . . . who hast shut up the deep (*lit.* 'the abyss'), and sealed it by thy terrible and glorious name.'

**2. as the smoke of a great furnace:** cf. Gen. xix. 28; Exod. xix. 18. But the meaning here may be that what at first looked like smoke, so black and dense it was, proved to be a suffocating cloud of locusts. This suggestion is borne out by the description given by a modern observer (1865): 'In April last we observed twice large dark clouds resembling smoke, moving to and fro, as if swayed by the wind. One morning these clouds came down, and proved to be locusts, so great in number that the whole land was covered with them.' This and many other valuable illustrations will be found in an Excursus on the subject in Prof. Driver's *Commentary on Joel* (Cambridge Bible for Schools).

**3. locusts.** This part of the fifth Trumpet (there is no parallel

upon the earth; and power was given them, as the  
 4 scorpions of the earth have power. And it was said  
 unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the  
 earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only  
 such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads.  
 5 And it was given them that they should not kill them,  
 but that they should be tormented five months: and  
 their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when  
 6 it striketh a man. And in those days men shall seek

in the Bowls series) corresponds to the eighth of the Egyptian Plagues. But the most instructive parallel is that with Joel's famous description of a plague of locusts (ii. 2-11), where there is special emphasis upon the darkness which they cause: 'The earth quaketh before them: the heavens tremble; the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.'

**as the scorpions of the earth.** To all their powers of mischief as locusts, these locusts of hell have added the power of scorpions to 'torment' men; see verse 5.

4. This, in fact, is to be their special function; for whereas the locusts of earth attack the vegetation only, these are commanded to refrain from 'any green thing,' and to hurt men.

**such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads.** There is evidently a reference here to the sealing of the 144,000 in chap. vii. Like the last of the Egyptian Plagues, this one is to fall upon those who have not made good their claim to be God's people, who have not 'this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.' 'The judgements of the trumpets are judgements on the world. The church, it is true, may also suffer from them, but not in judgement. They may be part of her trial, as she mixes with the world during her earthly pilgrimage. Trial, however, is not judgement. To the children of God it is the discipline of a Father's hand. In the midst of it the church is safe, and it helps to ripen her for the fullness of the glory of her heavenly inheritance' (Milligan).

5. Even the unscaled, however, are not to suffer the extreme penalty of destruction from this judgement. And the period of its duration is limited. The period is described as **five months**, because that is the ordinary length of a visitation of locusts, and for no symbolical reason.

6. **men shall seek death:** as after the opening of the sixth Seal; see vi. 16. The Seer here lays aside the apocalyptic manner, and speaks as with the tongue of a prophet.

death, and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die, and death fleeth from them. And the shapes 7 of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war; and upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold, and their faces were as men's faces. And they had hair 8 as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breast-9 plates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war. And 10

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**they shall desire to die.** It has been pointed out that we have here a 'horrible counterpart' to Paul's 'having a desire to depart and to be with Christ.'

**7. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war.** So in Joel ii. 4, 'The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses, and as warhorses (marg.) so do they run.' To horses clad in armour they would bear a special resemblance, but it is uncertain whether such armour was used by the ancients. The likeness may then be found in the disciplined array of their march.

**as it were crowns like unto gold.** This feature is difficult to identify with anything in the natural insect, the colours of which are thus described: 'They change in colour as they grow: at first they are black; when about three weeks old they become green, after two weeks more they are yellow striped with brown; at this stage they have wings, but too small to enable them to fly, and when in an erect position their appearance at a little distance is that of a well-armed horseman' (*Journal of Sacred Literature*, quoted by Prof. Driver). Another writer says, however: 'One specimen in my museum is so gaily coloured that it might be mistaken for a gaudy butterfly.'

**their faces were as men's faces.** In this and subsequent features the demoniacal character of these swarms is brought out; not only are the natural features heightened into terrors, but others are added which do not belong to natural locusts at all.

**8. their teeth were as the teeth of lions.** So Joel i. 6.

**9.** The word for 'breastplate' (*thorax*) is the scientific name for the breast: so that we might translate: 'They had breasts, as it were breastplates of iron.'

**as the sound of chariots.** So Joel ii. 5, 'Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains do they leap.'

they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in  
 11 their tails is their power to hurt men five months. They  
 have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name  
 in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek *tongue* he hath  
 the name Apollyon.

12 The first Woe is past: behold, there come yet two  
 Woes hereafter.

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

10. And they have tails like unto (the tails of) scorpions, and stings (in their tails), by means of which they hurt men.

11. They have over them as king. In this too they differ from the locusts of earth, which 'have no king' (Prov. xxx. 27).

the angel of the abyss. There is no word here for 'pit'; see on verse 1.

his name in Hebrew (cf. John v. 2, xix. 13, 17, 20; used only in the Fourth Gospel and this book) is Abaddon. This word appears first in the Wisdom Literature of the O. T., where it stands primarily for 'ruin,' 'destruction' (Job xxxi. 12); with the development of the doctrine of Sheol it became the special designation of the 'place of the lost' (Job xvi. 6; Prov. xv. 11); finally, in Job xxviii. 22 it is personified as it is here, and as 'Hades' is personified in Rev. vi. 8. See Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, article by R. H. Charles.

Apollyon. This name seems to be based on the LXX rendering of Abaddon, a word meaning 'destruction,' possibly with an indirect reference to the pagan deity Apollo; it is pointed out that the locust was one of the symbols of his cult. In the Talmud we find Death and Abaddon personified and in control of the angels of destruction.

12. The first Woe is past. It is noteworthy that no account is given, as in the case of the preceding judgement, of the carrying out of this one. The writer's adhesion to the pragmatism of his scheme is not mechanical; it will not be safe to force interpretations either from his consistency or from his inconsistency with himself.

ix. 13-21. *The Sixth Trumpet; the Second Woe.*

13. a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God. This is the altar of viii. 3, the altar of incense at which the angel had added incense to the prayers of the saints. The voice which seems to come from all four corners of the

one saying to the sixth angel, which had the trumpet, 14  
 Loose the four angels which are bound at the great  
 river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, 15  
 which had been prepared for the hour and day and

altar is the response to these prayers; in that sense it may be called the voice of God. In xvi. 7 it is the altar itself which speaks; but here it is a voice of supreme authority, such as might be looked for towards the climax of this cycle of judgements.

14. This is the only case in which the angel with the trumpet is called upon to do anything but sound. He is commanded to **Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates.** It is tempting, but incorrect, to connect these four angels with the group of four who in vii. 1 were seen 'holding the four winds of the earth.' The angels here are all in one place, not 'on the four corners of the earth'; they are not holding anything, but themselves bound; and there is no reference to winds, or to their work of destruction. Light is thrown upon these perplexing figures by a passage in the *Apocalypse of Ezra*, quoted by Bousset: 'And a voice was heard: let these four kings be loosed which are bound beside the great river Euphrates, which shall destroy a third part of mankind. And they were loosed, and there was a great commotion.' Now it is the function of these angels when unbound to lead forth a mighty army; they too are four in number, and bound beside the Euphrates; and from the way in which they are introduced (the angels) it appears that they were familiar figures; hence it has been concluded that John bases this vision upon old apocalyptic material, possibly induced thereto by the conviction that the anticipation was shortly to be fulfilled through the setting loose of the Parthian armies to attack the West. The Euphrates, in any case, is to be understood literally, in connexion with the age-long association of the district it suggests (Babylon, Assyria, Shinar; see Zech. v. 11) with forces both material and moral which were hostile to Israel. The connexion of the Parthians with anticipated judgement is found in the *Book of Enoch* (lvi. 5): 'In those days shall the angels gather themselves together, and turn eastward to the Parthians and the Medes, and stir up their kings, so that a spirit of unrest comes over them, and chase them from their thrones, so that like lions they break forth from their lairs, and like hungry wolves upon their herds.'

**which had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year.** That is, in most emphatic language, prepared against the hour appointed for their being loosed in the foreknowledge of God.

month and year, that they should kill the third part  
 16 of men. And the number of the armies of the horsemen  
 was twice ten thousand times ten thousand: I heard  
 17 the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in  
 the vision, and them that sat on them, having breast-  
 plates as of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone: and  
 the heads of the horses are as the heads of lions;  
 and out of their mouths proceedeth fire and smoke and  
 18 brimstone. By these three plagues was the third part  
 of men killed, by the fire and the smoke and the  
 19 brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths. For  
 the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their  
 tails: for their tails are like unto serpents, and have  
 20 heads; and with them they do hurt. And the rest

**the third part of men.** Compare the passage quoted above from the *Apocalypse of Ezra*.

**16. And the number of the armies of the horsemen.** It is left to be inferred that the angels proceed to lead out this great host. The number is the double of that mentioned in Dan. vii. 10—two hundred millions, obviously a figure for an innumerable host. That it consisted of 'horsemen' is in accordance with the connexion of the vision with the Parthians, whose strength lay particularly in their cavalry.

**17.** Both in their numbers and in their appearance and equipment these armies are such as to strike terror into their foes. They, apparently both men and horses (cf. verse 9), have breast-plates which are 'fiery red, smoky blue, and sulphurous yellow,' corresponding to the 'fire and smoke and brimstone' which 'proceed out of their mouths.' It is hard to say whether the writer aims at describing an army of demons, or whether he is only heightening hyperbolically the terrors of an overwhelming army of men; probably, as he looked for judgement to come both through human instruments and through demonic hosts, the features of each become for him interchangeable.

**18. the third part:** see verse 15, and viii. 12, note.

**19. their tails are like unto serpents.** The explanation of this strange addition to the imagery is probably to be found in the custom of the Parthians, who bound their horses' tails to a point, combined with their skill in shooting their arrows as they fled.

**20, 21.** This is a kind of epilogue to the first six Trumpets;

of mankind, which were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, 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<sup>21</sup> repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

And I saw another strong angel coming down out of 10

although only two have been described as actually fatal to men, yet men have been affected by them all, and, nevertheless, they repented not, but like Pharaoh 'hardened their hearts.' They repented not of their idolatry, worshipping still 'the works of their own hands' (cf. Isa. xlv. 9-20). They continued to fall down before idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone (cf. Dan. v. 4). On the worship of 'devils' cf. Deut. xxxii. 17: 'They sacrificed unto demons, which were no God'; 1 Cor. x. 20; 1 Tim. iv. 1.

**which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk:** so in Ps. cxv. 5-7.

**and they repented not of their murders:** so in Rom. i. 20, 29. Paul has pointed out the connexion between idolatry and immorality. It is curious to find here combined with murders, &c., the sin of sorcery, which belongs to a different class; it may refer to the special application of sorcery through philtres and the like to procure consent to sin in others.

The Second Woe is past, though the announcement of the fact is held over till xi. 14. Looking back on the six Trumpets it is to be observed that the effects of them all fall upon the unbelievers alone. Those who believe are affected only indirectly. Further, that the whole vision takes place in view of the double vision of the sealing of the faithful and the offering of their prayers for vengeance (viii. 1-5). 'One cannot perceive why this antithesis should point to a Jewish origin, and not just as well to a Christian source for the passage. It is true that chaps. viii and ix contain nothing that is specifically Christian, but they are not on that account Jewish' (Bousset).

#### x. 1—xi. 13. SECOND GREAT PARENTHESIS.

Here, at the point where we naturally look for the blowing of the Seventh Trumpet, we find a break corresponding to that between the Sixth and the Seventh Seals. This break, however, is longer, and extends to the thirteenth verse of the eleventh chapter, after which the seventh angel sounds. The interval is occupied

heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a little

with two episodal visions, to the first of which there is an introduction. The purpose of these episodes is less clear than that of those in the seventh chapter, but in all probability it is the same, viz. to provide a pause in the unrolling of judgement, and consolation and assurance in the first vision for the Seer, and in the second for the believing dwellers in Jerusalem.

x. 1-5. *Introduction to the First Vision.*

**1. And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven.** The fact that he sees this angel coming down out of heaven, as though he himself were now upon earth, has caused much perplexity to the commentators. There can be little doubt that up to this point the Seer has recounted what he saw as one who was 'in heaven,' and he does so still, only the heavenly things which are presented to his mind are necessarily presented in the forms of earthly experience. Thus heaven itself has for him a 'sky,' and in that sky he sees now the other strong angel. It is not easy to determine what angel or angels may be referred to in the word 'other'; possibly all the angels who have been mentioned, possibly the angel of v. 2, who also is described as 'strong' and calls for some one to open a book. It is strongly maintained by some (e. g. Dr. Milligan) that in this angel we are to recognize the person of Christ himself. The arguments for this view are chiefly derived from the description, which follows, of the cloud and the rainbow, and the feet 'as pillars of fire.' Against this, however, Alford's arguments seem conclusive: 'Such a supposition would entirely break through the consistency of apocalyptic analogy. Throughout the book angels are the ministers of the Divine purposes, and the carriers out of the apocalyptic procedure, but are everywhere distinct from the Divine Persons themselves. In order to this their ministry, they are invested with such symbols and such delegated attributes as beseeem in each case the particular object in view: but no apparent fitness of such symbolical investiture to the Divine character should induce us to break through the distinction and introduce indistinctness and confusion into the book.' Further, if this angel is the Lord himself, it will be difficult to find from whom the voice comes in verse 4.

In the description which follows, the various features, though they find a parallel in the description of chap. i, are assigned to the angel as the commissioned messenger of the Most High. At the same time, the choice of emblems is significant of covenant mercy as well as overwhelming power.

**2. a little book:** the word is a strong diminutive, 'a tiny little

book open : and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth ; and he cried with a great voice, 3 as a lion roareth : and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders 4 uttered *their voices*, I was about to write : and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And 5 the angel which I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, and sware 6

book,' and there is a contrast apparently intended with the 'Book' of chap. v, which, moreover, was sealed, whereas this is open. Its smallness may be emphasized also in contrast to the vast figure of him who holds it.

The Seer beholds this awe-inspiring figure bestriding both earth and sea, as though claiming both for the sphere of his authority.

**3. and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices.** The article is inserted by the R. V., and suggests that these seven thunders represented an idea already familiar ; see below.

**uttered their voices :** here and also in the following verse (where the words 'their voices' are supplied to complete the sense) the literal meaning is 'spake' : the utterances of the seven thunders were articulate, such as the Seer was desirous and prepared to write down.

**4. a voice from heaven.** The voice is the same voice as that which spake to John in i. 11, commanding him to write in a book 'what thou seest' ; it is the voice of Christ, now bidding him to refrain. That it comes 'from heaven' does not mean that the Seer has left the heavenly sphere ; see verse 1 and note.

**the things which the seven thunders uttered.** It is of course useless to speculate as to what these things were, or why the Apostle was forbidden to disclose them. He seems to have had before his mind a cycle of Thunders corresponding to, and supplementing, the Seals and the Trumpets. It is an interesting suggestion, but one for which there is no evidence, that there may have been a Seven-Thunder cycle of visions in some current Jewish Apocalypse, which he desired to dismiss. Any historical interpretation of the thunder-voices is out of the question ; whatever the Apostle heard he buried it in silence.

x. 5-11. *The Vision of the Little Book.*

**5. his right hand.** In Dan. xii. 7, on which this part of the vision is based, the angel ('the man clothed in lincn') lifted up

by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be time no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which

both his hands 'unto heaven'; for the action as a solemn asseveration cf. Gen. xiv. 22; Exod. vi. 8, marg.

**by him that liveth for ever:** so in Dan. xii. 7.

**who created, &c.:** this exhaustive description of God's universal creatorship prepares the way for an announcement which is to affect all creation.

**that there shall be time no longer.** There are two possible explanations of these words. They may predict the cessation of Time, in the sense that timeless eternity begins. To this we should find a parallel in the recently discovered *Book of the Secrets of Enoch* (xxxiii. 2): 'In the beginning of the eighth millennium there is no reckoning of time, and no end, neither years nor months, neither weeks nor days nor hours.' And again, at the day of Judgement 'the times shall perish' (Bousset). Or, the explanation may be found in connecting the proclamation with the answer given to the cry of the martyr-saints (vi. 11): 'It was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little time.' This time of their waiting is to be at an end. This second explanation seems to be more in harmony with the spirit of the book.

**7. in the days of the voice of the seventh angel.** The vision, which has just looked back to the souls beneath the altar, in chap. vi, now looks forward to the blowing of the last trumpet in xi. 15.

**then is finished:** better, 'then shall be finished'; the construction being a characteristically Hebrew one.

**the mystery of God:** see note on i. 20; revelation by mystery, by parable, by process, will be at an end. The thought answers strangely to that in our Lord's words (John xvi. 23): 'In that day ye shall ask me nothing,' i. e. no questions.

**according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants.** The translation in the R. V. is an attempt to give the force of the verb, which means 'declared the good news.' The construction is the same as in Acts xiii. 32. Cf. Gal. iii. 18. The 'mystery' will be 'finished,' because men shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but now face to face; the good news of the kingdom will be completely and finally realized, and men will no longer need to say to one another, 'Know the Lord,'

he declared to his servants the prophets. And the voice which I heard from heaven, *I heard it* again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel that standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the little book. And he saith unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth

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**the prophets.** The use just before of the specifically Christian word for making known the good news of God makes it possible, if not probable, that by these are meant the 'prophets' of the Christian Church as well as (if as well as) those of the old dispensation. Compare the Seer's own claim for himself to speak as a prophet, i. 3, xxii. 7.

**8. the voice which I heard from heaven:** i. e. the voice which in verse 4 forbade him to write, the voice of the Son of Man.

**9. And he saith unto me, Take it, and eat it up.** This episode is closely connected with the passage in Ezek. ii. 8—iii. 3, where the prophet is prepared for speaking the word of God unto the rebellious house of Israel by being caused to eat 'a roll of a book': 'Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go, speak unto the house of Israel.'

**it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey.** Ezekiel's roll was sweet in his mouth 'as honey for sweetness' (cf. Ps. xix. 10); but there is no reference to its being also bitter, even though 'there was written therein lamentations and mourning and woe.' Both the resemblance and the contrast are instructive. Ezekiel expresses the satisfaction of a man who is filled with the word of God, has received God's message, even though it be one of judgement. John dwells rather on the mingled quality of the contents of the revelation; and this arises not merely from the fact that the prophecies with which he is entrusted contain at once evil and good, judgement and glory, for the wicked and the righteous respectively; but also it expresses the mingled disinclination and readiness of every true prophet to be the mouthpiece of the Divine wrath.

**10. And I took the little book, &c.** The eating of the book signifies the receiving into himself by the Apostle of the new revelation. Where then are we to find the contents of the book, of this further revelation? It is generally agreed that they are

sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was  
 11 made bitter. And they say unto me, Thou must prophesy  
 again over many peoples and nations and tongues and  
 kings.

11 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and

unfolded in the remaining prophecies, but there is less agreement as to where its contents begin and how far they extend. Seeing, however, that the seventh Seal belongs to the scheme of the earlier visions, while the section which immediately follows this (xi. 1-13) is both episodic and more prophetic than apocalyptic in character, it seems best to regard the contents of the little book as beginning to be set forth with the opening of chap. xii. As a matter of fact a new departure is made at that point; the revelation enters upon a new field and expresses itself in terms of a new series of figures. On the other hand, it is difficult to distinguish any point in the remaining chapters where a similar break might be said to mark the close of the contents of this 'little book.' It is probable, therefore, that we should see its contents in all that follows chap. xii. The writer's attention is thenceforth directed specially to the church, its struggles and discipline, its foes and friends, its victory and peace. These are the contents of the 'little book,' as the judgement-purposes of God toward the whole world were peculiarly the contents of the great sealed book of chap. v.

**11. And they say unto me.** This can only mean angels or heavenly powers, though why they take the place of the voice that has just spoken is not clear.

**Thou must** (for so is the Divine will) **prophesy again** (as he had already done in the former part of the book). This is a further indication that a new and important division is about to begin. A like burden was laid upon Paul, 'to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel' (Acts ix. 15). There is an evident looking forward here to the contents of chaps. xiii, xvii, and xviii; while the form (prophetic) in which the writer's ministry is to be realized links the centre of the book with both the beginning (i. 3) and the end (xxii. 19).

The tenth chapter is of great importance for the understanding of the spirit and construction of the Apocalypse, and also for the defence of its unity. It looks both back and forwards, and forms a kind of clamp or bracket by which the two halves of the work are held together.

xi. 1, 2. *Introduction to the Second Episode.* These two verses, being somewhat loosely connected with what follows, are best regarded as an introduction to the prophecy of the Two Witnesses;

one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the

they serve to concentrate the attention of the reader upon the 'holy city' in which the witnesses are to prophesy, and to give assurance in advance that the power of Antichrist which is to prevail over them shall not prevail completely for ever.

**a reed like unto a rod.** Cf. Ezek. xl. 3: 'With a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed'; Zech. ii. 1; and Rev. xxi. 15.

**and one said:** *lit.* 'saying,' without any antecedent being expressed. The reading which is translated in the A. V. is an early attempt to fill in the omission; and if we must identify the speaker, it is probably an angel who both gives the reed and addresses the Seer.

**Rise.** It is not to be inferred that the Seer was prostrate or on his knees; the word is used as in 1 Chron. xxii. 19, Mark iii. 3, as a general summons to action.

**measure.** There is a threefold significance attached to the act of measuring in Scripture symbolism. It may be (1) with a view to building or rebuilding, as in Zech. ii. 1-3; Jer. xxxi. 39; Ezek. xl; or (2) with a view to destruction, as in 2 Kings xxi. 13; Isa. xxxiv. 11; Amos vii. 7-9; or (3) it may be for preservation in peril, and out of surrounding destruction, as in 2 Sam. viii. 2. As there is no opening for the first meaning here, the choice lies between the second and third. Of these the second is certainly the commoner, and there are commentators who would find it here, but verse 2, where that which is omitted from the measuring is devoted to destruction, leaves us no alternative but to understand that this measuring is for preservation.

**the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.** The commentators are sharply divided here between those who take the measuring and the things which are measured to be all and wholly symbolical, and those who take them to be at least in the first instance literal and referring to the material temple. The arguments for the former view will be found clearly stated by Dr. Milligan, whose conclusion is this: 'These, the most sacred parts of the temple-buildings, can only denote the most sacred portion of the true Israel of God. They are those disciples of Christ who constitute his shrine, his golden altar of incense whence their prayers rise up continually before him, his worshippers in spirit and in truth. These, as we have already often had occasion to see, shall be preserved safe amidst the troubles of the church and the world. In one passage we have been told that they are numbered; now we are further informed that they are measured.' These statements are, of course, both true and important, but it is still very doubtful whether they are the intended teaching of these verses. Each one of the words requires to be forced in order to bring out this interpretation.

2 altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two

The word translated 'temple' does not designate alone the shrine, the Holy of Holies, but the Holy Place, including the Holy of Holies and the altar. There is no precedent for taking the 'altar' in a figurative sense as a symbol of any body of people; and if the church or any section of it were symbolized by the 'temple' or the 'altar' or both, why should they be described also without any figure as 'them that worship therein'? It is a yet more serious, and indeed a fatal objection to this figurative interpretation, if, as it will appear below, we are compelled to understand 'the holy city' in the next verse of Jerusalem on earth. The temple and the altar must stand for so much of the temple area as is within the 'outer fore-court,' i. e. the inner fore-court in which the altar (of burnt offering) stood and the Holy of Holies. Then we get, what otherwise seems impossible, a perfectly simple meaning for the phrase 'them that worship therein,' i. e. in the fore-court of believers.

**2. the court which is without:** the 'outer court' of Ezek. x. 5. The Court of the Gentiles, with the city which lies beyond it, is to be given over to the heathen.

**the holy city.** So Jerusalem is called in Matt. iv. 5; xxvii. 53; cf. Isa. xlvi. 2; Dan. ix. 24. The epithet was practically a technical one, and it need cause no difficulty if we see cause to find the same city of Jerusalem described in verse 8 as 'spiritually called Sodom and Egypt.'

**shall they tread under foot:** cf. Luke xxi. 24, 'And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.' With this so closely parallel prediction of Jesus before us, it is hardly possible to escape the conclusion that here also is a prophecy of the siege and fall of Jerusalem, coupled with an assurance that the Holy Place and God's true worshippers who worship therein shall escape destruction.

**forty and two months:** so in xiii. 5 power is given unto the beast to 'continue forty and two months.' The same length of time is described in the next verse as 1,260 days, and in Dan. vii. 25, xii. 7, as 'a time and times and the dividing of a time,' i. e. three years and a half. The period probably has an historical basis in the actual or estimated duration of the persecution of Antiochus (see Driver's note on Dan. vii. 25). Or the figure may have been arrived at like other figures in

months. And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they 3

the Apocalypse, by breaking seven, the perfect number, into two halves. In either case it had become a kind of technical figure for the duration of the rule of wickedness, or of its incarnation in Antichrist. Any attempt to reckon out the figures either as days or years is foredoomed to failure as an employment of the Apocalypse for a purpose for which it was not intended, and an ignoring of our Lord's distinct and repeated warnings that the day or the hour is not to be known by men.

If, as we have seen reason to think, the prophecy of these verses refers to the earthly Jerusalem (and, indeed, were it not so), it follows in all probability that it was written before the siege and capture of the city by Titus in A. D. 70. It is partly the recognition of this fact that makes some of the commentators so anxious to establish a figurative interpretation; for it seems to them to involve the writing of the whole book before that date, and this is against the weight of the evidence both internal and external. That difficulty need, however, be no longer felt if we recognize the possibility that John quotes from earlier apocalypses. There is in these two verses not a little that has a specifically Jewish colouring, the 'measuring,' the description of God's guarded people as them that worship in the temple.

If we find ourselves compelled to date these verses before the fall of Jerusalem, and the book as a whole five or more years later, it will not therefore be necessary to abandon the unity of the book. All the conditions would be satisfied if John found these verses already in existence, and assigning to them a spiritual interpretation (it is here that that may come in), gave them a place in his own Apocalypse, as an introduction to the prophecy of the Two Witnesses. See further in the Introduction, p. 52.

xi. 3-13. *The Prophecy concerning the Two Witnesses.* This section is in the form, as it breathes the spirit, of prophecy rather than of apocalyptic. The material of it is largely drawn from the prophets of the O. T.; the speaker in verse 3 can hardly be other than God Himself, speaking as He speaks by the mouth of the prophets. At the same time we see in the same chapter the prophetic manner passing over into the apocalyptic, and the appearance of the figure most particularly characteristic of the later literature, the figure of Antichrist.

**3. And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy.** The translation in the A. V. expresses the sense of what is a Hebrew construction in the Greek; the meaning is: 'I will cause my witnesses to prophesy.'

Who or what is meant by these 'two witnesses' is one of the

shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore  
4 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees  
and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of

most debated questions in the interpretation of this book. In the description which follows we seem to catch glimpses of so many different solutions, echoes from the O. T., hints of actual events in Jerusalem, parallels to the sufferings and resurrection of our Lord, that it is little wonder if some of the wisest have abandoned the attempt to explain the prophecy. Once more these figures are either symbolical, or they are predicted as historical. Probably the latter mode of interpretation is the one to be preferred. That is to say, the Apostle intended to set forth these figures and their experiences as part of the events which were to be transacted in Jerusalem before the end.

The primary basis of the prediction is to be found in the passage in Mal. iv. 5: 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord come'; with this cf. Matt. xvii. 10; Mark ix. 11. In the apocalyptic literature this expected forerunner of the Messiah is described as a 'witness.' The idea of the two witnesses is probably connected with the passage in Zechariah, to which there is distinct allusion lower down (chap. iv): 'Then said he, These are the two anointed ones (R. V. 'sons of oil') that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.' By one of them is doubtless meant Elijah; the other was by most commentators of the early church identified with Enoch, but by some mediaeval ones with Moses. The latter theory has in its favour one at least of the points in the following description (v. 6), and the facts that the two figures of Moses and Elijah appear together in the narrative of the Transfiguration, while their names also, if not connected, follow one another in the passage in Malachi (iv. 4, 5).

**a thousand two hundred and threescore days.** The duration is the same as that of the heathen domination in v. 2, but the periods are not necessarily, though they are probably, identical.

**clothed in sackcloth.** This fixes the character of their prophecy; they are to be preachers of repentance, announcers of judgement; cf. Jer. iv. 8, vi. 26; Jonah iii. 5.

**4. the two olive trees.** In Zechariah (iv. *passim*) the two olive trees seem to feed with their oil the (seven-branched) candlestick on either side of which they stand. These 'sons of oil' represent Zerubbabel and Joshua, the ecclesiastical and the civil head of the restored theocracy. The Apostle connects the olive trees and the 'candlesticks' together, and finds them both typical of the two witnesses.

the earth. And if any man desireth to hurt them, fire 5  
 proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their  
 enemies: and if any man shall desire to hurt them, in  
 this manner must he be killed. These have the power 6  
 to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of  
 their prophecy: and they have power over the waters  
 to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with  
 every plague, as often as they shall desire. And when 7  
 they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that  
 cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them,  
 and overcome them, and kill them. And their dead 8

**5. desireth:** or A. V. 'will,' which is ambiguous; so John v. 40, vii. 17.

**fire proceedeth, &c.:** cf. Elijah, 2 Kings i. 10; Jer. v. 14, 'I will make my words in thy mouth fire'; *Sirach* ii. 1888, 'Elijah the prophet arose as fire, and his word burned like a flame.'

**6. These have the power to shut the heaven.** So Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 1 ff.; cf. Luke iv. 25), and that for a like period of three years and a half.

**and they have power over the waters, &c.** So Moses (Exod. vii. 19). These two figures are to be as it were personifications of the law and the prophets.

**7.** The 'finishing of the testimony' of the witnesses appears to correspond with the 'finishing of the mystery of God' in x. 7, and if so, this phrase links chaps. x and xi together, and both to xii ff., where the 'beast' and the war he wages are described at length.

**the beast:** here mentioned for the first time; a more suitable translation would perhaps be 'monster.' He is to rise **out of the abyss** (see note on ix. 2), as is also the monster of xvii. 8. But this feature is not sufficient to establish an identification; the beast here stands for the power and manifestation of Antichrist in general. The phases and stages of the manifestation come to be differentiated in subsequent chapters.

**shall make war.** In Dan. vii. 21 it is the 'other horn' of the fourth beast which 'made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.'

**8. their dead bodies:** the word here and in verse 9<sup>a</sup> is in the singular, but there is no distinction of meaning to be drawn from a comparison with the plural in verse 9<sup>b</sup>. There is a peculiar indignity involved in the neglect or refusal to give the bodies

bodies *lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations do *men* look upon their dead bodies

burial, which indicates that the city is to be in sympathy with, or under the fear of, the beast.

**the great city:** it is said, in spite of the last clause of this verse, that by this we are to understand not Jerusalem, but the 'great city' of the succeeding visions, i. e. Babylon or Rome, literally or spiritually. But the reasons given are quite insufficient, and particularly it is incorrect to say that Jerusalem is never called 'the great city.' In the fifth book of the *Sibylline Oracles* it is three times so described (154, 226, 413).

**which spiritually is called** (cf. 1 Cor. ii. 14, only) **Sodom and Egypt.** For the form in which the thought is cast, cf. Gal. iv. 25: 'Now this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to the Jerusalem that now is.' For the parallel between Jerusalem and Sodom, cf. Isa. i. 10, where the rulers of Jerusalem are addressed as 'ye rulers of Sodom'; in Ezek. xvi. 46-56, the wickedness of the great city is elaborately shewn to be worse than that of her sister (Sodom). On the other hand, there appears to be no known passage in which Jerusalem is allegorically identified with Egypt; nevertheless, such an identification with what had been 'the house of bondage' for God's people lay near at hand.

**where also their Lord was crucified.** Those who, like Alford, have decided that 'the great city' is not Jerusalem but its spiritual antagonist, Rome or Babylon, find great difficulty in dealing with this plain statement: 'the fact is that the literal Jerusalem in whom was found the blood of all the saints who had been slain on earth, has been superseded by that wider and greater city, of which this prophecy speaks: and as the temple in prophetic language has become the Church of God, so the outer city in the same language has become the great city which will be the subject of God's final judgements.' The historical allusion is too definite to be thus explained away; it loses its whole point if it does not identify the place where the witnesses lose their lives with that where their Lord himself had suffered in the flesh.

**9. And from among the peoples, &c.** Both the grammar and the combination of words connect this section with the rest of the Apocalypse; cf. v. 9, vii. 9, xiv. 6: and also with other Johannine writings, cf. John i. 35, iii. 1, xiii. 21, and especially xvi. 17; 1 John iv. 13; 2 John 4 (Greek).

**look upon:** for the A. V. 'shall see': so the present tense is

three days and a half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And they that dwell on the earth <sup>10</sup> rejoice over them, and make merry; and they shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth. And after the <sup>11</sup> three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which beheld them. And they <sup>12</sup> heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And in <sup>13</sup>

to be substituted for the future in several cases below: the prophetic diction begins to pass over into the narrative, as though the events were beheld by the writer.

**three days and a half:** the period corresponds with the duration of their activity, three years and a half, in the same way as the 'three days' that our Lord lay in the grave corresponds with the traditional three years of his ministry.

**10. they that dwell on the earth.** It is not necessary to limit this by translating 'in the land,' *scil.* of Palestine; the meaning is 'the ungodly in the world,' all who accepted the rule of Antichrist, against whom therefore the witnesses had directed their prophecies of judgement.

**and they shall send gifts:** to express common rejoicing; cf. Esther ix. 18, 22; Neh. viii. 10, 12; also Luke xxiii. 12.

**11. the breath of life from God:** better, as in the A. V., 'the Spirit of life.' The whole imagery of the passage is closely connected with Ezek. xxxvii, the vision of the dry bones. See especially verse 10: 'And the breath (or wind, or Spirit) came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet'; and the promise in verse 14, 'I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live.' This prophecy of the resurrection of the witnesses is a presentation in a concrete form of the assurance given by Paul: 'If we have become united with him by the likeness of his death, we shall be also by the likeness of his resurrection' (Rom. vi. 5).

**12. And they heard:** there is another well-attested reading, 'I heard,' which has internal evidence slightly in its favour.

**Come up hither.** Cf. Matt. xxv. 34.

**in the cloud.** The article marks the cloud-chariot as being a well understood feature in connexion with the passing of the

that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons: and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second Woe is past: behold, the third Woe cometh quickly.

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed

witnesses. It may be an indirect reference to the cloud within which Moses and Elijah passed from the sight of the apostles on the mount of Transfiguration (Luke ix. 34, 35; Mark ix. 7, 8).

**13. seven thousand:** this, like the 'tenth part' of the city, is a symbolical figure, standing for the appointed number, but a great one: it would represent probably about a tenth part of the inhabitants.

**gave glory to the God of heaven:** this is taken by some to mean only that they acknowledged God's power, like the evil spirits which 'believe and tremble.' But in view of the parallel passages such as Luke xvii. 18, Rev. iv. 9, and of the prediction in Mal. iv. 6, to which it is natural to expect an allusion here, it is better to understand that this is a mark of conversion.

**the God of heaven:** this phrase, which is characteristic of the later books of the O. T. (Ezra i. 2; Nehemiah *passim*; Dan. ii. 18, 44), occurs in the N. T. only here and in xvi. 11.

14. This epilogue to the sixth trumpet would naturally be looked for at the end of chap. ix; cf. viii. 13, ix. 12. It does not follow that the episodic visions of x—xi. 13 are to be regarded as part of the result of the sixth trumpet. They may have had an independent origin, and yet as they have a function, and that a very important one, in the development of the subsequent chapters, to which, as we have seen, they serve as a kind of new introduction, the writer has judged this the best point to insert them.

xi. 15-19. *The Seventh Trumpet.* The seventh Trumpet, like the seventh Seal, represents the climax of progressive judgement, and here again we should expect to find at least the ushering in of the final crisis, the great day of the Lord. But, as in viii. 1, so here, we are to find preparation made for the opening of a new procession of visions. The circles of heavenly beings who have been spectators of the drama of judgement up to this point, break forth into praise of the Most High, expressing their assurance that whatever power Antichrist may have, or seem to gain, it will be but temporary, for has not God already begun

great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become *the kingdom* of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sit before God 16 on their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the 17 Almighty, which art and which wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign. And 18 the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and *the time* to give their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the

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to manifest His wrath, and also His will to reward His servants, the prophets and the saints.

**15. great voices.** Contrast the silence which followed the opening of the sixth Seal. It is not said from whom these voices proceed, but the parallel in vii. 9, 10 suggests that it was from the 'great multitude' which stood before the throne.

**The kingdom of the world** (cf. Matt. iv. 8-10) is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: *lit.* 'is become our Lord's and his Christ's.' Though the final struggles on earth have still to take place, their issue is foreseen, and already realized in heaven. Cf. xii. 10, and the quotation from Ps. ii. 2 in Acts iv. 26, 'his Christ' being the N.T. equivalent of 'his anointed' in the psalm.

**he shall reign:** there is no indication as to who is meant; it is sufficient to observe that the Apostle draws no distinction.

**16. the four and twenty elders.** See note on iv. 4.

**fell upon their faces, &c.** Cf. v. 14.

**17. Lord God, the Almighty.** See i. 8, and note.

**which art and which wast.** R.V. omits the third clause which has been added from i. 4, 8, iv. 8: the Judge and Deliverer has already come. 'This ascription of thanks is the return for the answer to the prayers of the saints furnished by the trumpets' (Alford); and also the exulting acknowledgement that, now that God has manifested His glory, the final victory is nigh at hand. The spirit of this hymn of praise is closely parallel to that of Pss. xcvi and xcvi.

**18. to thy servants the prophets:** among whom the writer would probably reckon himself; cf. x. 7. The description—'prophets,' and 'saints,' and 'them that fear thy name'—is probably intended to be exhaustive of the church.

saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth.

19 And 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.

12 And a great sign was seen in heaven; a woman

**19. And there was opened:** better, 'And the temple of God that was in heaven was opened.' This is no mere accessory to the vision, but the result, at least the primary one, of the blowing of this Trumpet. It is in the presence of this open temple, with the ark of the covenant plain within it, that the things about to be narrated are to take place. The scene depicted in chap. iv has been replaced by that which sets it forth in symbol, the temple of God's Presence and the ark of His covenant-mercy. The reference to the ark is in accordance with the Jewish tradition that, when the first temple was destroyed, the ark was carried off to a place of safety by Jeremiah, to be restored to Israel at the time of Messiah's appearing; cf. 2 Macc. ii. 1-8; *Apocalypse of Baruch*, vi. 7-10.

**and there followed lightnings, &c.** Each of the other cycles, the Seals (viii. 5) and the Bowls (xvi. 18), closes with a similar description.

Once more this section is linked, as by living tissue, to what has gone before and to what follows after. 'Verse 16 looks back to the vision of the Seals; verses 17, 18 give a short anticipation of that which is to follow—wrath of the heathen (xiii ff.), wrath of God (xix, &c.), judgement upon the dead, reward of the servants of God (xx), destruction of the destroyers of the earth (xvii, xviii)' (Bousset).

#### xii-xiv. THIRD PARENTHESIS: THE OPPOSING FORCES.

xii. *Vision of the Woman, the Man child, and the Dragon.* This chapter constitutes one of the greatest problems in the interpretation and in the literary study of the book. This must have been felt already by every intelligent reader, and it is confirmed by the history of its exposition. Nearly every theory which attacks the unity of the book has fastened in the first place on this chapter. To shew its true character, and thereby to safeguard the book's unity, is one of the achievements of more recent investigation. This will be best understood at the close of the exposition.

arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child: and she crieth out, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered. And there was seen another sign in heaven; and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon

**1. a great sign** (for A.V. 'wonder'). The word itself, as well as the adjective, indicates an appearance of special significance; cf. Matt. xxiv. 30, 'the sign of the Son of man,' and the demand of the Pharisees for 'a sign' (Luke xi. 16); it is specially characteristic of the Fourth Gospel, as the name for the miracles of Jesus. The appearance of this 'great sign' here marks a new beginning in the structure of the book, one which is indeed the beginning of the end.

**was seen.** In contrast to all the other visions (except xi. 19, xii. 3), there is nothing to shew by whom this vision was seen. Contrast xiii. 1, 11, xiv. 1, &c.

**in heaven.** The scene that follows is transacted not in heaven, wherein it is impossible to think of a 'wilderness,' but 'in the heavens,' or, as we might say, 'in the sky'; in verse 7 the words are the same, but the sense is different; see note there.

**a woman.** This figure has been variously interpreted: by some of the Virgin Mary, by others of the Christian church, by others again of the Jewish church. What John probably understood by her was the ideal community of God's people, first in its Jewish form, in which it gave birth to Jesus, and then in its Christian form, in which it was persecuted by the dragon (verse 13) and fled into the wilderness (verse 6).

**arrayed with the sun, &c.** This imagery may be connected with Canticles vi. 10, and with Gen. xxxvii. 9. A curious verse in the *Testament of Naphtali* ('and Judah was bright as the sun, and under his feet were twelve rays') suggests that there is some connexion of ideas between the twelve stars and the tribes of Israel.

**2.** In Mic. iv. 9f. the distress suddenly falling upon Israel is described under the picture of the birth-pangs coming upon a travailing woman; in Isa. lxvi. 19 the coming of the Messianic period is represented under the figure of an easy and successful delivery for Israel figured as a woman. 'This parallel certainly points to the fact that this vision refers somehow to the birth of the Messiah or of the Messianic period, and that in the woman we are perhaps to see a personification of Israel' (Bousset).

**3. And . . . another sign, &c.** See above on verse 1.

**a . . . dragon.** From verse 9 (cf. xx. 2) we learn that this

4 his heads seven diadems. And his tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was about to be delivered, that when she was 5 delivered, he might devour her child. And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught

dragon was identical with the 'old serpent' called 'the Devil and Satan.' The form in which he is represented here, as lying in wait for the offspring of the woman, anticipates the description of the First Monster in xiii. 1, but has its roots in ancient tradition. From Ps. lxxiv. 14 we learn that Leviathan, which was a sea-monster of dragon type, was understood to have several heads, and the 'ten horns' come from the description of the fourth 'beast' in Dan. vii. 7. The red colour of the dragon suggests at once the ravages of fire and the shedding of blood; the diadems upon the seven heads that it is through kings that he exercises his power.

4. The hugeness and power of the monster are suggested by this verse, which is founded on Dan. viii. 10, where the little horn is said to 'cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground' and trample upon them.

and the dragon stood before the woman, &c. Whatever may have been the original application of this feature, it readily lends itself to a Christian interpretation, whether we think of Herod prompted by the evil one to seek the life of the infant Jesus, or, more generally, of the hostility and hatred which pursued the Christ to his death upon the Cross.

5. who is to rule (*lit.* 'shepherd'; cf. ii. 27, xix. 15) all the nations with a rod of iron. A direct quotation from the description of the Messiah in Ps. ii. On the theory that the Apostle is here adopting earlier apocalyptic material, this quotation might equally well form part of the original, or be inserted by himself to make plain the interpretation which he put upon the passage.

and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne. This point shews that, though transacted before the eyes of the Seer 'in the heavens,' the vision-events did not take place 'in heaven.' The words, 'and unto his throne,' clearly harmonize with the mind of a writer who speaks of 'the throne of God and of the Lamb.' But it is difficult to understand how this would be a natural description of the ascension of the man Christ Jesus, if it were from the hand of the Apostle, or how all other events in the life of Jesus could be passed over by him except the Birth and the Ascension.

up unto God, and unto his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

And there was war in heaven : Michael and his angels 7

**6. And the woman fled into the wilderness, &c.** The woman, as understood by John, must now be thought of as the church in its Christian form, and the historical event which appears to be predicted is the flight of the Christians at Jerusalem 'unto the mountains' (Matt. xxiv. 16) round about Pella, before the final destruction of the city.

where she hath (*lit.* 'where she hath there'—a Hebraic form of expression) a place prepared of God. In verse 14 it is described simply as 'her place.'

that there they may nourish her. There is no indication to whom this function is assigned. This experience of the woman-Israel is obviously parallel to that of the natural Israel, and again to that of Elijah in the desert.

a thousand two hundred and threescore days. See xi. 2, 3, and note. The period is identical with that described as 'a time, and times, and half a time' in verse 14; and in both passages is the conventional number which, from Daniel downwards, had been assigned as the duration of the times of final stress and struggle, 'the sufferings that lead up to Christ' (1 Pet. i. 11).

The contents of this verse being practically reproduced in verse 14, it is best to take it as anticipatory of that which actually takes place after the conflict in heaven now to be referred to. This makes it unnecessary to ascribe the 'sign in heaven' to any particular period, e. g. after the birth of Christ; what the vision proceeds to narrate is that event which, once transacted in the heavenly sphere, governs the issue of the struggle now to be transferred to the earthly.

xii. 7-12. *The war in heaven.*

**7. Michael:** cf. Jude 9; according to apocalyptic writings one of the four archangels, Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, and Phanuel. In Dan. x. 13 he is the one who specially concerns himself with the Jewish race, and (xii. 1) appears as their champion. He was said to be the holder of the secret of the mighty 'word,' by which God created heaven and earth (*Enoch*, lxix. 14), as well as 'the angel who spoke to Moses in the Mount' (Acts vii. 38), and a mighty intercessor for the sins of the people. It was entirely in accordance with the conceptions of later Judaism that Michael

*going forth* to war with the dragon; and the dragon  
 8 warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither  
 9 was their place found any more in heaven. And the  
 great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that  
 is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole

should appear as captain of the hosts of the Lord. 'Here the figure of Michael thrusts aside that of the Messiah; for it is Michael, and not the Child, that overthrows Satan when storming the heavens—a fact which speaks strongly for the Jewish origin of most of Revelation xii' (R. H. Charles, 'Michael,' in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*).

and the dragon warred and his angels, i. e. the 'fallen angels,' whose fall and fate are described in the beginning of the *Book of Enoch*.

8. neither was their place found any more in heaven. If this be pressed so as to raise a difficulty as to what place they had in heaven, previously to the conflict, the explanation probably is that, even to Satan and his fallen angels, a place was assigned by Jewish thought in (the lowest) heaven; though evil, they were spiritual. In Isa. xxiv. 21 they appear to be referred to in the phrase 'the hosts of the height,' and to be identified with the fallen deities of the heathen (see O. C. Whitehouse, art. 'Demon,' in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*). The underlying conception probably is that they attempted to storm the highest heaven, and in the end were cast out of heaven altogether. Cf. Isa. xiv. 12 ff. 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O day star (Lucifer), son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst lay low the nations! And thou saidst in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, . . . Yet thou shalt be brought down to Sheol (marg.), to the uttermost parts of the pit' (abyss).

9. was cast down. Cf. Luke x. 18; John xii. 31.

the old serpent. Cf. xx. 2; an allusion to the story of the Fall (Gen. iii. 1, &c.).

called the Devil and Satan. 'The Devil,' as a name for the evil one, does not appear in the O. T. but in the N. T. from Matt. iv. 1 and on. On the other hand, 'Satan,' the 'accuser' (see especially Zech. iii. 1, 2), is so named both in Job *passim* and in Ps. cix. 6. In the N. T. the latter word has not wholly lost its etymological meaning, and once at least stands for 'slanderer'; see 1 Tim. iii. 11 compared with iii. 6, and Dr. Horton's note there. The threefold description gathers up the primitive, the prophetic, and the N. T. conception of the supreme Power of Evil.

This vision of the conquest of evil already accomplished on the

world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. And I heard a great voice 10 in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of 11

higher plane of existence, 'in heaven,' has a very close bearing on all that is to follow. 'There is a battle, but Christians advance to it as conquerors; before it begins victory is theirs'; cf. John xvi. 33.

**10.** Those who distinguish different 'sources' or 'redactions' of the Apocalypse almost unanimously assign verse 11 to the latest or Christian editor. But it is difficult to see why they separate it from verse 10, in which the writer again speaks in the first person (the only case in this chapter), and where the thought presents striking parallels to v. 12, 13, and vii. 12.

**a great voice in heaven:** cf. xi. 12, 15, xix. 1. The voice may be that of a multitude, e. g. of the angels, who acknowledge those 'who loved not their life' as their brethren.

**the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom.** With this as realized in heaven contrast the situation as still felt on earth, 'the tribulation, and kingdom, and patience' (i. 9). This is the alchemy of faith, that it transmutes 'the tribulation, and kingdom, and patience' of the believer into 'the salvation, and kingdom, and power' of the saint.

**the authority.** The word adopted by the R. V. indicates what is possibly suggested by the Greek, viz. that this 'authority' is conferred upon the Christ; it is the same which Jesus claims for the 'Son of Man,' Matt. ix. 6; John v. 27; cf. John i. 12. Cf. also Rev. xiii. 5.

**which accuseth them, &c.** The hostility of the evil one is as continuous as the praise of those who have overcome his power (iv. 8). Bousset quotes from *Enoch* (xl. 7 ff.): 'The fourth voice I heard as it turned aside the Satans, and permitted them not to come before the Lord of Spirits, to accuse the dwellers on the earth.' Alford mentions a Rabbinic tradition to the effect that Satan accuses men all the days of the year except the Day of Atonement.

**11. And they overcame.** As the subject here is clearly the 'brethren' of the previous verse, it is difficult to see how this can be a description of the victory gained in heaven and by 'Michael and his angels,' unless the somewhat proleptic connexion be

- the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony;  
 12 and they loved not their life even unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.
- 13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought

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explained as the Apostle's interpretation of the true contents of the heavenly victory.

**because of the blood of the Lamb, &c. :** *lit.* 'on account of,' because it had been shed. 'Their victory over Satan was grounded in, was a consequence of, his having shed his precious blood; without that the adversary's charges against them would have been unanswerable' (Alford). To this is added, as a further ground of their victory, the word of their testimony, i. e. the word to which they testify, the revelation of God given to them by Jesus. Both causes of their victory are thus ultimately outside themselves, though both are appropriated and made effectual by their faith.

**they loved not their life.** We seem to catch here an echo of our Lord's teaching in one of its most essential principles: 'He that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal' (John xii. 25; cf. Luke xiv. 26), for 'loved-not' is construed as though it were the single word; they carried their 'not-love' of self so far that they died.

**12. Therefore rejoice, O heavens.** This follows upon the announcement in verse 10 that the accuser is cast down out of heaven; all strife there is at an end for ever, but on the other hand it is now transferred to earth, on which therefore woe is pronounced.

**a short time.** The same period is described as 1,260 days in verse 6 and as 'a time, and times, and half a time' in verse 14; it is short because 'the end is at hand,' but the very shortness of his opportunity increases the fury of Satan.

xii. 13-17. *The woman escapes.*

**13.** The verse takes up the story of the woman where it was dropped at verse 6, the intervening section having served to explain the presence of the dragon upon earth, and his peculiar wrath against those who 'keep the commandments of God.' John probably saw the 'persecution' of the dragon in the suffering that overtook both Jews and Christians through the siege and capture

forth the man *child*. And there were given to the woman 14  
 the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into  
 the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished  
 for a time, and times, and half a time; from the face of  
 the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth 15  
 after the woman water as a river, that he might cause  
 her to be carried away by the stream. And the earth 16  
 helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth,

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of Jerusalem; or (if we take the woman as strictly representing for him the true Israel according to faith) in the earliest persecution which had befallen the church.

**14. the two wings of the great eagle.** The definite article which is marked as present by the R. V. renders unsatisfactory all of the explanations which have been offered, even the supposed parallel with Exod. xix. 4. Some definite power was doubtless symbolized by the figure, but the Apostle has given us no clue to suggest how it is to be understood.

**into the wilderness.** See verse 6, and note.

**15, 16.** The interpretation of these difficult verses is a sore trial to the sober-minded commentator. Dr. Milligan's (*Expositor's Bible*, p. 214) may be an excellent homiletic application; but it is hardly an interpretation. The most suitable is probably that of Alford, who lays stress on the numerous parallels found in this chapter with the experiences of Israel escaping from Egypt to Canaan. 'There we have the flight into the wilderness, there the feeding in the wilderness; there, again, the forty-two stations corresponding to the forty-two months of the three years and half of this prophecy; there, too, the miraculous passage of the Red Sea, not indeed in strict correspondence with this last feature, but at least suggestive of it.' He understands the river—of the Roman armies which threatened to sweep away Christianity in the wreck of the Jewish nation; or of the persecutions which followed the church into her retreats, but eventually became absorbed by the civil power turning Christian; or of the influx of heretical opinions from the pagan philosophies, which tended to swamp the true faith. It is true that we may properly see in one, or in all, of these events, the historical analogy to what is symbolically predicted here; but is it conceivable that the Apostle, with any of these generalities before his mind, would have thrown them into the form of these symbols? and indeed does not the interpretation leave much, and that precisely the most perplexing part, of the imagery uninterpreted? The earth **helping the woman** by opening its mouth and

and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out  
 17 of his mouth. And the dragon waxed wroth with the  
 woman, and went away to make war with the rest of  
 her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and

swallowing up the river, finds no parallel in the crossing of the Red Sea, neither in any event in the history of the church. This is recognized indeed by Alford, who says: 'I confess that not one of these [interpretations] seems to me satisfactorily to answer the conditions; nor do we gain anything by their combination. But anything within reasonable regard for the analogies and symbolism of the text seems better than the now too commonly received historical interpretation, with its wild fancies, and arbitrary assignment of words and figures.' It seems certainly more in accordance with a true respect for the writer and his work to suppose, as many indications would lead us to do, that in this chapter he is incorporating earlier material, that these verses, in their original setting, had a simple interpretation in some marvellous deliverance of God's people from their enemies, and that John adopted them, along with the rest of the chapter, because he saw in their imagery a general analogy to the experience of the church after the ascension of Christ.

17. Seeing that by the seed of the woman—the 'male-child' in verse 5—the Messiah is plainly to be understood, **the rest of her seed** can only mean his brethren by faith in him—his disciples. The prediction then is that when the woman, the community with which he had been most closely connected, had escaped either by flight to Pella, or through the cessation of local persecution, the dragon's fury was turned upon a wider circle of disciples, upon the church beyond Palestine. This is indeed what is to be described in the next chapter, to which this one is therefore both directly and indirectly an introduction.

The more minutely this chapter is studied the more will the theory of its origin suggested above commend itself on many grounds. It is the only alternative to surrendering the book's unity of authorship. The chapter is seen to differ widely from its context in language (saving the exceptions noted in verses 5, 10, 11, 17), in imagery, in the plane of thought on which it moves. On the other hand, were it already in existence, as a piece of Jewish apocalypse, it is easy to see how the Apostle might be led to insert it here, with its many points of correspondence to Christian tradition and to Christian experience, and with it many points of attachment to what was to follow. If we neglect for a moment the verses which contain specifically Christian thought, we get a perfectly coherent and impressive

hold the testimony of Jesus: and he stood upon the 13 sand of the sea.

And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems,

narrative, from the standpoint of a Jew during the Maccabæan struggles. When we restore these again, we get the interpretation put upon that narrative by an apostle of Christ, who saw in it a prediction of the birth and glory of the Lord, and of the sufferings of his church.

**the testimony of Jesus.** The word 'Christ' is omitted by the R. V. in accordance with the MS. evidence. For the phrase as descriptive of the true disciples cf. vi. 9, i. 2; also xiv. 12.

xiii. 1-10. *The vision of the monster with the ten horns.* The vindictive wrath of the 'dragon,' now concentrated on those brethren of Jesus, displays itself in a twofold incarnation of his power on the stage of human history: (1) As the father of cruelty and blasphemy he 'gives power' to the first monster, the Roman state, with its ten emperors (verses 1-10), and (2) as the father of lies (John viii. 44) he animates the second monster, the false 'prophet,' which is the minister and agent of the first (verses 11-17).

1. **and he stood.** The reading here adopted by the R. V. is that of all the best MSS. It makes the 'dragon' of xii. 17 still the subject of this clause. Nevertheless, many good editors (Alford, Holtzmann, Spitta, Bousset) keep the first person as less artificial and in accordance with such precedents as Dan. viii. 2.

**And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea.** The whole passage should be carefully compared with Dan. vii. 2 ff., 'I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven brake forth upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea,' &c.

Here doubtless the sea stands for the Mediterranean, from beyond which the empire of Rome rose before the eyes of the Jews; cf. 4 Ezra xi. 1, 'Behold, an eagle arose from the sea.'

**having ten horns, &c.** The order of the horns and the heads (reversed in the R. V.) is different from that in the description of the dragon (xii. 3), and it is the 'horns' here that carry 'crowns.' It is generally agreed that the 'horns' stand for rulers or kings of the respective kingdoms, but not so generally agreed as to which of the Roman emperors are here designated. We may begin with Cæsar or with Augustus, and, reckoning all who put on the purple, find the tenth in Vespasian or in Titus; or, omitting the three (Galba, Otho, and Vitellius) whose reigns were of trifling duration, arrive at Nerva or Trajan; others again, by reckoning the usurpers as one, make the tenth Domitian,

2 and upon his heads names of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and  
 3 his throne, and great authority. And *I saw* one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered  
 4 after the beast; and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they wor-

**names of blasphemy:** the blasphemous name on each head is doubtless that of Augustus, conveying in its Greek form (*Sebastos*) even more of reverence and worship. Cf. xvii. 3 and Dan. xi. 36. The ten horns wearing diadems probably refer to all ten emperors (including Galba, Otho, and Vitellius)—the seven horns with the names of blasphemy to the seven among these ten (excluding the 'pretenders') who reigned long enough to have temples erected to them and to be known in Asia as *Sebastos*. So that the seventh in the one case is the same as the tenth in the other, viz. Titus.

**2. like unto a leopard . . . bear . . . lion:** uniting therefore the characteristics of the three first monsters in Dan. vii. The Apostle probably means to indicate that the Roman monster has combined in itself the power and the qualities of the earlier world-empires.

**the dragon gave him his power, &c.** The Roman empire with which the Christians have to struggle owes its power and prestige and dominion to Satan, and Satan has been overcome in heaven (chap. xii).

**3. one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death.** The participle is the same used to describe the Lamb 'as it had been slain,' the beast Antichrist thus becoming a diabolical counterpart of the Christ, as here in his death so later on in his return to life. It is generally admitted now that the 'wounded head,' which was healed, is identical with the 'beast' in xvii. 8, 'that was and is not and yet is' (cf. xvii. 11), and that both represent the Emperor Nero. See note on xvii. 8, and on the Nero legend that this emperor was not dead, or, if dead, would return to life again, and would come back to wreak vengeance on Rome and his enemies; see Introduction, p. 56.

**and the whole earth wondered after the beast:** so in xvii. 6-8.

**4. because he gave his authority unto the beast.** The power

shipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war with him? and there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and there was given to him authority to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, *even* them that dwell in the heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, 7

behind the monster is the Satanic power of the dragon. Again, in the worship which is jointly offered to Satan and his vice-gerent on earth, there is a horrible travesty of the worship due to 'Him that sitteth upon the throne,' and to the Lamb, and it was being performed in all the temples devoted to the cult of the reigning Cæsar.

**Who is like unto the beast?** A parody, as it were, of the praise of God, e. g. in Exod. xv. 11; Isa. xl. 5.

**5. a mouth speaking great things:** so in Dan. vii. 8; cf. also Dan. xi. 36 (of Antiochus), and Ps. xii. 3.

**authority** (cf. xii. 10, note) **to continue** (or, 'to act,' 'to work') **forty and two months.** In Dan. xi. 28 it is predicted that Antiochus 'shall do exploits' (A. V.).

**forty and two months.** Cf. xi. 2, note, also Dan. vii. 25, and Prof. Driver's note there. The predicted period of Antiochus' persecution became the conventional duration of the reign of Antichrist, in whatever person he were to be manifested.

**6. for blasphemies against . . . his tabernacle, even them that dwell in the heaven.** If the R. V. be right in omitting (with the preponderance of MS. authority) 'and,' then the 'tabernacle' of God is in apposition with 'them that dwell (*lit.* 'tabernacle') in heaven,' and we have an anticipation of the thought in xxi. 3; if, with Bousset, we keep 'and,' God's tabernacle is heaven (not the earthly temple), and those that dwell there the holy angels.

**7. to make war with the saints** (i. e. with the holy people of God upon earth), **and to overcome them.** So in Dan. vii. 21, 'I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.' There is considerable MS. authority, however, for the omission of the whole phrase. If it is really part of the text, it predicts the fearful struggle which is to follow on the return of Nero, or other final manifestation of Antichrist. It is a struggle which will be world-wide. Bousset quotes from *Barnabas* (lxvii. 7), 'But the king of Babylon, who hath now destroyed Sion, shall arise and boast himself over the people,

and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, *every one* whose name hath not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world. If any man hath an ear, let him hear. If any man *is* for captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

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and shall speak great things in his heart in the presence of the Most High.

**authority over every tribe, &c.** A universal empire, as wide as that offered by Satan to Christ, is now conferred upon the Beast—for a season.

**8.** Worship is offered to the Cæsar-monster only by those whose names have **not been written in the book of life of the Lamb.** See iii. 5, and note. The book is further described here and in xxi. 27 as belonging to the Lamb and specifically to the Lamb as slain.

**from the foundation of the world.** Is this clause to be connected with 'written,' or with 'slain'? The order in which it stands certainly suggests the latter, but the parallel expression in xvii. 8 ('whose name hath not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world') speaks strongly for the former. Alford, however, argues that this citation is 'irrelevant,' and maintains that it is the death of Christ which, having been foreordained 'from the foundation of the world,' is said to have *taken place* in the counsels of Him with whom the end and the beginning are one.

**9. If any man hath an ear, &c.** This phrase, serving to lay a solemn emphasis on what has just preceded, forms a link between this passage and the Letters to the churches; cf. ii. 7, and note.

**10.** Both the text and the meaning of this verse are difficult to ascertain. The best supported text yields the rendering which is found in the R. V. The text translated in the A. V. may be understood to convey to the sufferers by persecution the assurance that their sufferings will not go unavenged, and a parallel will be found in Matt. xxvi. 52, 'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' And the same will be the meaning of the R. V. in the second clause. The R. V. in the first clause, however, suggests that

And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; 11 and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of 12 the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast,

the fate of each man is determined by the will of God; and we may bring the second clause into harmony with the first by accepting a (less well attested) reading, 'If any is to be slain with the sword, with the sword is he to be slain'; so practically Alford. This is supported by the parallel in Jer. xv. 2, 'Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword'; and it leads up naturally to the pregnant reminder, **Here is the patience and the faith of the saints:** it was by recognizing and accepting as the will of God for him even the extreme of persecution that might befall that the individual Christian would shew his endurance and approve his faith.

xiii. 11-17. *The vision of the Second Monster, the 'beast' from the land.*

**11. And I saw another beast:** a power like unto the first in essential character, 'hostile to God's flock and fold.' From xvi. 13, xix. 20, xx. 10, it is plain that this 'beast' and the 'false prophet' are identical. All attempts to find a single historical figure (e. g. Simon Magus) represented here are vain. Alford, who finds in the first beast 'the aggregate of the empires of the world as opposed to Christ and his kingdom,' sees in the second 'the sacerdotal persecuting power, which, gentle in its aspect and professions, was yet cruel in its actions.' The best explanation is found by combining the relative passages cited above, viz. that this second beast stands for the heathen priesthood, and specially for the priestly guilds set apart for the service and maintenance of the emperor-worship. That it rises 'from the land' may signify that this priesthood was native-born.

**he had two horns like unto a lamb.** Possibly from Dan. vii. 3, where it is a ram which has two horns, but more probably the image is suggested by the shape of the headdress worn by these priests. In their fancied resemblance to a lamb they are as 'wolves in sheep's clothing.' This is made plain when they speak, for they speak the dragon-language.

**12.** The authority exercised by the second beast is wholly derived from the first, as his, in turn, from the dragon; and he uses it to promote the worship of the first, i. e. of imperial Rome personified in the emperor.

'Observe that it is the death-stroke of the beast that here is

- 13 whose death-stroke was healed. And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out  
 14 of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men. And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, who hath  
 15 the stroke of the sword, and lived. And it was given unto him to give breath to it, even to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image  
 16 of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, the

spoken of, and no longer that of one of its heads. More and more, as the prophecy proceeds, the head with the wound and the beast himself, Nero "redivivus" and the Roman "imperium" are identified. In Nero "redivivus" the writer sees the whole power and horror of the empire concentrated' (Bousset).

**13. great signs:** as Jesus predicted of the false prophets (Matt. xxiv. 24), and as Paul anticipates concerning Antichrist, 'whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders' (2 Thess. ii. 9).

**fire.** There is possibly an allusion to some actual exhibition of quasi-magic, such as was performed by the magicians of Pharaoh.

**14. he deceiveth:** so in ii. 20, 'the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess . . . both teacheth and deceiveth my servants'; cf. Matt. xxiv. 24.

**saying to them . . . that they should make an image to the beast.** The function of the second beast, the priests of the Cæsar, is here plainly declared: they are to make every effort to spread the imperial cult. That they had already been peculiarly successful in this in Western Asia we have already learnt from the Letters to the churches; e. g. ii. 13, note.

**15. to give breath to it, &c.** The reference here is probably once more to pretended miracles wrought by the priests; the commentators adduce those assigned to Simon Magus ('ego statuas moveri feci et animari exanima'), to Apollonius of Tyana, and Apelles of Ascalon, the last at the court of Caligula.

**should be killed.** Death was the punishment for refusal to worship the image of the emperor. This became the test for Christianity, as we see from Pliny's famous *Letter to Trajan*: 'As

small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, *even* the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it

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for those who said they neither were nor ever had been Christians, I thought it right to let them go, since they recited a prayer to the gods at my dictation, made supplication with incense and wine to your statue, which I had ordered to be brought into court for the purpose, together with the images of the gods.'

**16. a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead.** It is hardly necessary to record the many guesses which have been made at the meaning of the 'mark of the beast.' The most hopeful have been those which connected it with the branding of slaves or soldiers, or the tattooing of the religious emblem of a god (cf. 3 Macc. ii. 29). Verses 16 and 17 taken together make it plain that the mark (1) Contains or consists in the name or number of the beast; (2) has some general connexion with buying and selling; and (3) that it has some special reference to the Roman emperor who is associated with the beast. The most probable solution of these conditions has recently been propounded by Deissmann (*Bible Studies*, pp. 241 ff.), who finds a clue in the seals which are stamped upon many papyrus documents of the first and second centuries. These seals were inscribed with the name of the reigning emperor and with the year of his reign; some of them possibly contained his effigy; they were necessary upon documents relating to buying and selling, and the technical name for them was *charagma*, the word here translated, 'mark.' A facsimile of one of these seals, which is in the Berlin Museum, is given in Deissmann's book. It cannot be said that their use wholly explains the 'mark'; the receiving of the mark upon the hand or the forehead remains unexplained. But if the use of such a seal were imperative in buying or selling (and its use might be arbitrarily extended as a means of persecution), and if the use of it were recognized by Christians as an acknowledgement of emperor-worship, it would not be difficult to understand how those who traded with it might be said to have accepted on themselves 'the mark of the beast.'

xiii. 18. *The number of the Beast.*

**18. Here is wisdom.** 'These words seem to direct attention to the challenge which follows.'

is the number of a man : and his number is Six hundred and sixty and six.

14 And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the

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**it is the number of a man.** The possibility of designating a man by a number is founded, of course, on the fact that both in Greek and in Hebrew the only numerals in use were the letters of the alphabet. Thus every man's name had a certain numerical equivalent, ascertained by adding together the values of the separate letters. And it was indeed a favourite form of speculation to connect names and ideas through their equivalent numerical values. The meaning here (in spite of xxi. 17, which is different) is probably that the meaning of the number can be found, for it is the name of a (well-known) man.

**and his number is Six hundred and sixty and six.** An almost incredible number of names have been found to contain or forced to yield this number. Mohammed, Napoleon, and Luther are only a few of the most striking. Two only deserve consideration. One is *Lateinos* = *Latinus*, i. e. the Latin or Roman emperor or race. This suggestion, originally made by Irenæus, has obtained a good deal of support from modern commentators (e. g. de Wette, Bleek, Düsterdieck, Elliott), but suffers from the objections that there is no case of the word occurring in this form, and that there seems no connexion between *Latium*—its inhabitants and its kings—and the seven emperors of Rome. The other and more probable explanation sees in the number the numerical reckoning of the name of 'Nero Cæsar,' spelt in Hebrew letters. Objection has been made that this requires the word for 'Cæsar' to be written 'defectively'; but this is not without a parallel. And this interpretation explains better than any other the 'various reading' of the number which is attested and discussed by Irenæus. If Nero's name be written 'full' (Neron), the value of the name and title is 666; on the other hand, if the last letter ('n') of his name be dropped, we have the value of 616, which is the alternative reading in some MSS. Fuller details will be found, and answers to objections in Bousset's *Commentary*, and in Holtzmann's *Handcommentar*, in both of which this is the solution adopted.

#### XIV. THE VISION OF THE LAMB ON MOUNT SION FOLLOWED BY THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE OF THE WORLD.

Following the principle of contrast, of which we have already had several illustrations, the Apostle in the opening of this chapter narrates a vision of the heavenly glory and power of the Lamb. The preceding two chapters have set before us the three great enemies of the church—the Dragon, the first Beast,

mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from <sup>2</sup> heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard *was* as

and the second Beast—in their efforts and their partial or temporary success. ‘The picture thus presented is fitted in the highest degree to depress and discourage.’ It has even been announced that power is given to the Beast ‘to war with the saints and to overcome them.’ To this dark picture John now adds a counterpart, a picture of ‘those that be for us,’ of the Lamb and his attendant host, the glory that is reserved for those that resist and endure.

xiv. 1-5. *The Lamb on Mount Zion.*

**1. the Lamb.** The R. V. makes it plain that it is *the* Lamb of v. 6, &c., who again appears.

**on the mount Zion.** Interesting parallels are quoted from 2 Esdras ii. 42, ‘I Esdras saw upon the mount Zion a great multitude, whom I could not number, and they all praised the Lord with songs’; xiii. 35, ‘But he [Messiah] shall stand upon the top of the mount Zion,’ &c. Whether John has in view the earthly or the heavenly Son cannot, and need not, be decided; the probability is in favour of the former.

**a hundred and forty and four thousand:** i. e. a definite and typical number. It would be too much to say that they are the same persons as are referred to as ‘sealed’ in vii. 4; the absence of the definite article suggests the contrary. Possibly we have here to do with a conventional apocalyptic formula, in this case applied to those who, like the seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal, had ‘kept themselves from idols,’ and resisted the Beast.

**having his name, and the name of his Father.** This reading of the R. V. is well established. It is a silent indication of whom men understood to be the Lamb, and another case of the writer’s setting Christ side by side with God; see iii. 13, vii. 3. There is an evidently intended contrast with those who, having yielded to the Beast, have received *his* name on their foreheads (xiii. 17).

**2. as the voice of many waters.** See i. 15, note, and add to references there 4 Ezra vi. 17, ‘And, behold, there was a voice [of God] that spake, and the sound of it was like the sound of many waters.’

**of a great thunder.** Cf. vi. 1, xix. 6. This voice, thunderous in its fullness, and yet melodious in its harmony, proceeds ‘from

3 *the voice* of harpers harping with their harps: and they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, *even* they that had been purchased out  
4 of the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These *are* they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These

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heaven,' from angel-choirs, not from the 144,000, who are probably upon earth; theirs, however, is the power to learn the 'new song.'

**3. a new song.** Cf. v. 9, and note. 'Heaven is revealed to earth as the home-land of music; of music thus remote from what is gross or carnal; exhibiting likewise an incalculable range of variety, which rebukes and silences perverse suggestions of monotonous tedium in the final beatitude' (C. Rossetti).

**before the throne, &c.** This carries the thought back to the great vision in chap. iv, which is, indeed, the background against which the other vision appears.

**no man could learn the song.** 'The song had regard to matters of trial and triumph, of deep joy and heavenly purity of heart, which none other among men but these pure and holy ones are capable of apprehending. The sweetest and most skilful harmonies convey no pleasure to, nor are they appreciated by, an uneducated ear: whereas the experienced musician finds in every chord the most exquisite enjoyment. Even so this heavenly song speaks only to the virgin heart, and can be learnt only by those who accompany the Lamb whithersoever he goeth' (Alford).

**purchased.** Cf. v. 9: the same word as in 1 Cor. vi. 20, 'Ye are bought with a price.'

**4. virgins.** The word is here used for the first time as a masculine. These clauses are certainly to be taken in a literal sense, and as reflecting a high estimate of Christian asceticism; cf. Matt. xix. 12, and 1 Cor. vii. 1 ff. But though there may be special privileges attached to virginity, it does not follow that they are higher; we must take along with this passage the recognition and consecration of the marriage-state which may be inferred from the imagery of chaps. xxi, xxii. The exaltation of virginity here is a counterpoise to the false teaching, the 'doctrine of Balaam,' which had invaded more than one of the 'churches' (ii. 4, 20).

**which follow the Lamb, &c.** This is still a characteristic

were purchased from among men, *to be* the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth 5 was found no lie: they are without blemish.

And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having 6 an eternal gospel to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he saith with a great voice, Fear God, 7

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of their earthly life; the phrase is therefore an echo of our Lord's word (Matt. x. 38, xvi. 24 f.).

to be **the firstfruits**. Purchased like all the rest of the redeemed from the power of sin and from among the mass of men, these, who have this special virtue, are a special offering to God. In Jas. i. 18 the whole of those there redeemed are a firstfruits of creation.

**5. in their mouth was found no lie.** Cf. Ps. xxxi. 2 (LXX), 'Neither is there guile in his mouth'; Isa. liii. 9; Zeph. iii. 13, and Ps. xiv. 1 ff. What had been predicted of the Messiah is now a characteristic of his saints.

**without blemish.** As in Jude 24; Col. i. 22; 1 Pet. i. 19.

xiv. 6-13. *Vision of three angels.* These three angels successively announce details of the coming judgement: (1) General, with a summons to worship; (2) in particular, upon Babylon-Rome; (3) in particular, upon every worshipper of the Beast.

Bousset points out that the very multiplicity of theories, assigning various verses and fractions of verses in this passage to various sources and editors, is a proof that they cannot be split up. Every verse looks either backwards or forwards (see below), and verse by verse can be shewn to be marked by the author's style and vocabulary. The passage is an introduction to the great scenes of judgement which begin with xiv. 14.

**6. in mid heaven.** See viii. 13, note.

**an eternal gospel:** with the indefinite article (R.V.). Alford and others maintain that, in spite of the absence of the definite article, we must render 'the eternal gospel' (cf. Rom. i. 1). It is difficult, however, to see 'the gospel' in the technical sense in the proclamation which follows, and better to give the word a more general meaning, connected probably with the 'mystery of God' (x. 7), i.e. the announcement of the near approach of the end, which for those who believed was 'good news.'

**every nation, &c.** Cf. xiii. 7.

**7.** With the contents of this verse compare 'the gospel of the kingdom of God,' as it was preached by Jesus, 'Saying, The

and give him glory; for the hour of his judgement is come: and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters.

8 And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

9 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon  
10 his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his

time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel' (Mark i. 15).

**give him glory:** as the affrighted remnant did in xi. 13.

**and worship him, &c.** A striking parallel to the summons of Paul to the men of Lystra: 'We . . . bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is.'

**fountains of waters.** Cf. viii. 8, 10, xvi. 3, 4.

**8. Fallen, fallen is Babylon.** An anticipation of the judgement upon Rome to be described in chap. xviii. The cry is an echo from Isa. xxi. 9; cf. also Jer. l. 2, liv. 8.

**which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine, &c.** Cf. xvii. 2. Two ideas are here combined: the 'wine of her fornication,' of which the nations have drunk at her hands, and the cup of Divine wrath which she and they are to drink at the hand of God; see Jer. liv. 7, xxv. 15-17; also Rev. xviii. 6, where the two ideas are again combined.

**9. worshippeth the beast.** See xiii. 15, 16.

**10. he also.** As well as Babylon.

**the wine of the wrath of God.** Cf. xvi. 19, xix. 15.

The figure comes from Ps. lxxv. 8, 'In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine foameth; it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same: surely the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out'; cf. Job xx. 3. It may be traced further in Isa. li 17-23; Hab. ii. 15; Jer. xxv. 27, xlix. 12.

**which is prepared unmixed:** *lit.* 'which has been mixed unmixed'; but the word for 'mixed' had acquired the technical

anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment <sup>11</sup> goeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and whoso receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the <sup>12</sup> patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God; and the faith of Jesus.

sense of 'prepared,' inasmuch as it was only by diluting that wine became drinkable. In the LXX version of Ps. lxxv. (lxxiv.) 8, the cup in the hand of the Lord is 'full of mixture of wine unmixed.'

**with fire and brimstone.** Cf. the description of Topheth in Isa. xxx. 33, 'The pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.' In the whole passage Isa. xxxiv. 8-10 is plainly in the writer's mind ('the smoke thereof shall go up for ever'). The imagery, applied by Isaiah to the 'day of the Lord's vengeance,' is used also to describe earlier judgements (Deut. xxix. 23; Job xviii. 15), and is derived ultimately from the narrative in Gen. xix. 24 of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is instructive to trace the development of the symbolism springing from the circumstances of an event in history, providing the traditional features, first of *any* great judgement, then of 'the day of the Lord,' and, finally, of the judgement of Christ.

**in the presence of the holy angels.** Cf. *Enoch*, xlvi. 9, 'And I will give them over into the hands of Mine elect: as straw in fire, and as lead in water, they will burn before the face of the holy, and sink before the face of the righteous.'

**11. the smoke:** so xviii. 9, xix. 3, xx. 10.

**they have no rest.** In poignant contrast with the creatures who worship God, who 'have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord' (iv. 8).

'Immediately before the great, decisive struggle the writer holds up before the eyes of the faithful the fate of every one who succumbs in the conflict with the Beast. The Apocalypse is a declaration of war against the worship of the Cæsars' (Bousset).

**12. Here is the patience of the saints:** cf. xiii. 10 (18). The saints know that endurance is expected of them (Matt. x. 22, xxiv. 13); here, in the struggle with the Beast, is the field wherein they are to shew it.

**they that keep, &c.:** in apposition to 'the saints.' There

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them.

14 And I saw, and behold, a white cloud; and on the

is plainly an allusion to 'the rest of the seed of the woman' (xii. 17). Here, however, for 'the testimony' is substituted 'the faith' of Jesus, i. e. faith in him; cf. Mark xi. 22; Rom. iii. 22; Gal. ii. 16.

**13. a voice from heaven saying, Write:** as in x. 4 a like voice commanded him not to write.

**Blessed are the dead:** who from now onwards die in the Lord. Whatever more general meaning we may have learnt to attach to these words, they have here some special significance which is connected with the phrase 'from henceforth.' Those 'die in the Lord' who die maintaining their faith in Jesus, and to many the testing opportunity of martyrdom is close at hand. By this promise they are encouraged to endure unto the end; but their 'blessedness' is not due only to the fact that they die 'in the Lord,' but that they die after the end has begun. 'The harvest of the earth is about to be reaped; the vintage of the earth to be gathered. At this time it is that the complete blessedness of the holy dead commences: when the garner is filled and the chaff cast out. And that not on account of their deliverance from any purgatorial fire, but because of the completion of this number of their brethren, and the full capacities of bliss brought in by the resurrection' (Alford).

**that they may rest, &c.** This may depend upon 'die' (they die in order to rest), or, taking 'that' in the sense of 'because' (xxii. 14; John viii. 56, ix. 2), it may be an explanation of 'blessed' (blessed because they rest). The latter is more probable.

**their works follow with them.** Their 'works,' their Christian character and life, their 'deeds of weekday holiness' are not lost; these are the things men 'carry out' with them. The best commentary on the phrase will be found in Matt. xxv. 34-40.

xiv. 14-20. *Vision of the harvest and vintage of the earth.* Almost without exception the critics, who trace different documents and different hands in the composition of the book, fasten upon this section as a proof of their contentions. They assert that it plainly marks the conclusion of an apocalypse, and that the final judgement is not only ushered in, but completed here. On the other hand, it is surely only the preparation for judgement that is still described; the earth is reaped, but the separation of the wheat from the tares is still to follow; the

cloud *I saw* one sitting like unto a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the temple, crying with 15

winepress is trodden, but the marriage-supper has still to be described; the fate of the wicked may be indicated, but the lot of the righteous, who are to 'shine forth as the sun,' is also an essential factor in the 'end.' The passage is not difficult to understand if we take it, like the preceding visions, as an anticipatory announcement of what is afterwards to be described in detail.

**14. a white cloud.** The imagery comes from Dan. vii. 13, 'I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man' (R. V.); cf. Mark xiv. 62; Matt. xxiv. 30; Rev. i. 7.

**like unto a son of man:** cf. i. 13. According to Prof. Driver (*ad loc.*) the phrase in Daniel 'denotes simply, in poetical language, a figure in human form'; but shortly after the book was written the figure began to be interpreted personally and directly applied to the Messiah. This is seen most plainly in the *Book of Enoch*, where, in fact, 'the Son of Man becomes a recognized title of the Messiah (see Driver's *Daniel*, pp. 102 f., and R. H. Charles, *Book of Enoch*, particularly pp. 312-17). A whole world of thought lies between the suggestive words in Daniel and the definite rounded conception as it appears in *Enoch*.' In *Enoch* it denotes a supernatural person. It is in this developed sense, developed during the apocalyptic period, that our Lord accepts and claims the title for himself. And he gave to it a yet deeper spiritual significance, especially by combining with it the conception of the suffering servant in Isaiah. 'Whilst therefore in adopting the title "the Son of Man" from *Enoch*, Jesus made from the outset supernatural claims, yet these supernatural claims were to be vindicated not after the external Judaistic conceptions of the *Book of Enoch*, but in a revelation of the Father in a sinless and redemptive life, death, and resurrection' (Charles). For John, who had known Jesus, the phrase describes the Lord from heaven returning in more than Messianic glory.

**a golden crown:** so in xix. 12, 'many crowns' (diadems).

**15. another angel:** i. e. another besides the one previously mentioned. It is pressing the language too far to argue from this phrase that the figure on the cloud is also that of an angel; even though this angel is represented as giving instruction to the seated figure, it is only as the messenger of the will of God. 'The Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father doing.'

a great voice to him that sat on the cloud, Send forth thy sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap is come; for  
 16 the harvest of the earth is over-ripe. And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped.

17 And another angel came out from the temple which  
 18 is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, he that hath power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for  
 19 her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth,

**out from the temple:** *sc.* the heavenly temple of chap. viii.

**Send forth.** Cf. Mark iv. 29.

**the harvest of the earth is over-ripe:** better 'fully ripe'; *lit.* 'is dried up.'

**16.** To the question whether this reaping of harvest symbolizes the ingathering of the wicked, or of the saints, or of both together, Alford with considerable hesitation replies that the harvest is the ingathering of the saints, and the vintage the assembling of the wicked for judgement. So too Milligan: 'The latter is the harvest of the good; the former is the vintage of the evil.' On the other hand, the passage in Joel iii. 13, to which this is closely parallel, makes harvest and vintage alike the figures of judgement, in which there is no such distinction; so in Jer. li. 33 the 'harvest' is the time of God's vengeance. It is probably better to assume that the thought of the separation and separate fate of the two classes is not yet here in this anticipatory prediction, which foretells, under the double figure, the gathering of all to judgement, and anticipates the issue for the wicked.

**18. out from the altar.** Cf. viii. 3; also vi. 9, ix. 13.

**that hath power over fire.** In the *Book of Jubilees*, ii, we find, 'angels of the spirit of fire,' 'angels of hail,' &c. So in Revelation, 'angels holding the four winds' (vii. 1), and the 'angel of the sun' (xix. 7). The angel of fire comes out of the altar of burnt-offering.

**thy sharp sickle:** or 'pruning-knife.' The word in its feminine form is used in classical Greek both for the 'sickle' and for the 'pruning-knife.'

and cast it into the winepress, the great *winepress*, of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden 20 without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvel- 15

**19. into the winepress.** The figure is taken from Isaiah (lxiii. 1-6), in which 'it is not the Messiah, nor the servant of Jehovah who is pictured (treading 'the winepress alone'), but Jehovah.' Cf. Lam. i. 15, and Zech. xiv. 1-4.

**20. without the city.** Numerous suggestions are contained in this phrase: Zech. xiv. 4, the feet of the Lord 'shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem'; according to Zech. xiv. 10, 'the king's winepresses' were a familiar feature external to the city; according to Joel, the judgement was to take place in the valley of Jehoshaphat: and there 'without the gate' (Heb. xiii. 12) Jesus had suffered, 'treading the winepress alone'; the scene of judgement therefore is here laid in the same place, 'without the city.'

**blood from the winepress:** so in Isa. lxiii. 3.

**even unto the bridles of the horses:** cf. *Enoch*, i. 3, 'And in those days the fathers together with their sons will be smitten in one place, brothers will fall in death one with another until it streams with their blood like a river. And the horses will walk up to the breast in the blood of sinners, and the chariot will be submerged to its height.'

**a thousand and six hundred furlongs.** The number is certainly a typical one; but no satisfactory explanation of it has yet been suggested.

#### XV-XVI. THE VISION OF THE SEVEN BOWLS.

'Nothing can more clearly prove that the Revelation of St. John is not written upon chronological principles than the scenes to which we are introduced in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the book. . . . We are now met by another series of visions setting before us judgements that must take place before the final issue. This is not chronology; it is apocalyptic vision, which again and again turns round the kaleidoscope of the future, and delights to behold under different aspects the same great principles of the Almighty's government, leading always to the same glorious results' (Milligan).

xv. *The preparation for the Bowls.*

**1. another sign:** as in xii. 1, where see note.

lous, seven angels having seven plagues, *which are the last*, for in them is finished the wrath of God.

- 2 And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire; and them that come victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing  
3 by the glassy sea, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works,

**having seven plagues.** See Lev. xxvi. 21, 24.

which are **the last, for, &c.** This order (R. V.) marks the connexion of the clauses; these are the last plagues, because in them (Bousset, Holtzmann, 'after them') the wrath of God is 'filled up.'

**2. a glassy sea** (iv. 6, note) **mingled with fire.** The added clause, of which no satisfactory explanation can be given, does not affect our impression that this is an allusion to the same feature in the heavenly scene as is referred to in chap. iv.

While this phrase (cf. v. 7) links the chapter with the early part of the book, the second part of the verse links it with the chapters that immediately precede, in which the Beast, his image, mark, and number have been described.

**that come victorious.** It is unfortunate that even the R. V. does not bring out the identity of the original word, 'those that overcome.' The whole expression is a pregnant one—'those that overcome and so have escaped from the beast,' &c.; though the escape may have been by the death of martyrdom.

**by the glassy sea:** i. e. upon its shore, as the Children of Israel were standing by the shore of the Red Sea when they sang the song of Moses.

**harps.** Cf. v. 8, xiv. 2.

**3, the song of Moses . . . and the song of the Lamb.** It is one song, one which catches up the triumph of God's people on the occasion of their first deliverance 'with an outstretched arm' (Num. xii. 7; Exod. xiv. 31), but passes on into the yet more jubilant triumph of those who have been caused to triumph in Christ (2 Cor. ii. 14). 'In this great victory all the triumphs of God's people are included and find their fulfilment.'

**the servant of God.** Cf. Exod. xiv. 31.

This 'song' contains the echoes of many phrases in the O. T.; it has also been noticed that its structure shews the *parallelism* characteristic of Hebrew poetry.

**Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord.** Cf. Ps. xcvi. 1, cxi. 2, &c.

O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages. Who shall not fear, 4  
O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy righteous acts have been made manifest.

And after these things I saw, and the temple of the 5  
tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: and 6  
there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, arrayed with *precious* stone, pure

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**the Almighty:** see i. 8, note. The word occurs nine times in the Apocalypse, and only once besides in the N. T.

**righteous . . . are thy ways.** Cf. Ps. cxliv. 17.

**thou King of the ages.** 'Saints' (A. V.) is certainly wrong, but there is another reading, equally well attested with 'ages,' viz. 'nations'; the latter has further support in Jer. x. 7, from which this and the following clauses appear to be quoted.

**4. holy.** The precise Greek word is used of God only here and in xvi. 5.

**all the nations shall come, &c.** Cf. Ps. lxxvi. 9; Isa. lxvi. 23.

The three explanatory clauses may be taken as giving successive reasons for the fear and glory of God; or the pause in thought may be after 'holy,' and the two following clauses may explain respectively the first and second thoughts in the verse, 'all nations,' &c., answering to 'Who shall not fear?' and 'thy righteous acts made manifest' explaining the recognition of God's holiness. The parallelism of structure favours the latter interpretation, as does also the parallel in xvi. 5.

This scene in heaven, preparatory to the pouring of the Bowls, corresponds with that of viii. 3-5, preparatory to the sounding of the Trumpets. There the prayers, here the praises, of God's redeemed are presented before Him.

**5. the temple of the tabernacle . . . was opened:** as already in xi. 19. It is the same temple, and the meaning is not that it was opened again, but that the events which follow were transacted in presence of that open temple; but here the feature of its contents which is emphasized is the testimony, the Tables of the Law which bore witness to the holiness and justice of God, whereas in xi. 19 it is the Ark to which attention is drawn—the symbol of the covenant of Divine grace.

**6. arrayed with precious stone.** This curious feature is due to a various reading which has been adopted by the R. V. It is strongly attested by MS. authority, but as it differs from that

and bright, and girt about their breasts with golden  
7 girdles. And one of the four living creatures gave unto  
the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath  
8 of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple  
was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from  
his power; and none was able to enter into the temple,  
till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be  
finished.

16 And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to  
the seven angels, Go ye, and pour out the seven bowls  
of the wrath of God into the earth.

of the A. V. only by a single letter, and only yields sense at all by the insertion of the word 'precious,' it is best to regard it as due to a very early mistake of a copyist, and keep the old reading, 'clothed in linen.' With this cf. Ezek. ix. 2.

**pure and bright.** These epithets, being in common use for the garments of angels, confirm the above judgement; see Acts x. 30; Matt. xvii. 2; xxviii. 3.

**golden girdles.** So in the vision of the Son of Man, i. 13.

**7. living creatures:** i. e. the cherubim; see on iv. 6.

**golden bowls:** broad shallow vessels, probably of a saucer shape, so that their contents could be poured out at once and suddenly. They represent the 'basins' of the temple furniture, and were used for presenting incense, and drink-offerings or libations. Here however they are filled, not with wine, but with 'the wine of the wrath of God' (cf. xvi. 19).

**8. the temple was filled with smoke.** From Isa. vi. 4. Smoke, like 'cloud,' is a symbol of the presence of the Divine glory and majesty; see Exod. xl. 34, 35; 1 Kings viii. 11; Ezek. x. 4. The presence of God, thus manifested for judgement, closed the temple against all access until these judgements were complete.

*xvi. The pouring of the Bowls.* The plagues which follow on the pouring of the Bowls are to be understood neither as a repetition of those following on the Trumpets, nor as a wholly independent series of judgements. They represent the woes and judgements which immediately precede the coming of Christ, in their horror and certainty, in the universality with which they affect all forms of life, and in their special application to the forms of iniquity and blasphemy which have been exposed to view in chaps. xii-xiv.

And the first went, and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and which worshipped his image.

And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living soul died, *even* the things that were in the sea.

And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters; and it became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art thou, which art and which wast, thou Holy One, because thou didst thus judge: for they poured out the blood of 6

'No attempt to determine the special meaning of the objects thus visited by the wrath of God—the land, the sea, the rivers and fountains of waters, and the sun—has yet been, or is ever perhaps likely to be, successful; and the general effect alone appears to be important' (Milligan).

**2. a noisome and grievous sore.** So the sixth of the Egyptian Plagues (Exod. ix. 8-11) is 'a boil breaking forth with blains'; cf. Deut. xxviii. 27, 35.

**xvi. 3. The second Bowl.** As in the case of the Trumpets, the second and the third of this series affect respectively the sea, and the rivers, and springs. Here the effect in both cases is to turn the waters into blood, as in the first of the Egyptian Plagues (Exod. vii. 17-21).

**3. every living soul:** *lit.* 'every soul of life'; it is the animal life that is above referred to.

**xvi. 4-7. The third Bowl.**

**5. the angel of the waters.** Cf. vii. 1, xiv. 18; and *Enoch* xl. 16, 'the spirit of the seas.' This association of angels with cosmic or elemental forces is found in Rabbinic literature; see Weber's *Jüdische Theologie*, p. 172 f.

**which art and which wast.** The construction is ungrammatical here as in i. 4; there is no authority for the addition of 'and shalt be' in this passage.

**thou Holy One:** the word is the same as in xv. 4.

**6. they poured out the blood, &c.** Cf. Ps. lxxix. 3, 'Their blood have they shed like water.' The 'saints' are the Christians in general; the 'prophets,' that class among the Christians in

saints and prophets, and blood hast thou given them to drink : they are worthy. And I heard the altar saying, Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgements.

8 And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun ;  
9 and it was given unto it to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat : and they blasphemed the name of the God which hath the power over these plagues ; and they repented not to give him glory.

10 And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast ; and his kingdom was darkened ; and they

which the writer reckoned himself. For the form of the judgement cf. Isa. xlix. 26.

**they are worthy.** Contrast iii. 4.

**7. the altar.** The altar on which are the prayers of the saints (viii. 3), and under which are the souls of the martyrs (vi. 9), is personified as speaking in their name.

**true and righteous, &c.** So in xix. 2 ; cf. John v. 30, vii. 24.

xvi. 8, 9. *The fourth Bowl.*

**8. upon the sun.** Like the fourth Trumpet, the fourth Bowl affects the sun only, with a different result. Observe also that whereas the effects of the Trumpets (verses 1-4) are limited to a third part of the object, here the pouring of the Bowls affects the whole.

**9. repented not.** So neither did 'the rest of the men which were not killed' by the plagues following the sixth Trumpet (ix. 20) ; contrast, however, xi. 13.

The first four Bowls form a group by themselves, as do the first four Seals and Trumpets, the judgements which follow them being general in their character. The remaining three in this series also have special reference to definite enemies of the church and of God.

xvi. 10, 11. *The fifth Bowl.*

**10. the throne of the beast.** 'By "the throne of the beast," Rome, the seat of Cæsarism, is evidently intended ; this plague therefore strikes the seat of the enemy of God itself' (Bousset).

**his kingdom** (those lands which owned his sway) **was darkened** : better, 'overwhelmed with darkness.' Cf. the fifth

gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the 11  
God of heaven because of their pains and their sores ;  
and they repented not of their works.

And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great 12  
river, the *river* Euphrates ; and the water thereof was  
dried up, that the way might be made ready for the  
kings that *come* from the sunrising. And I saw *coming* 13  
out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth  
of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet,  
three unclean spirits, as it were frogs : for they are spirits 14

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Trumpet (ix. 1, 2), and the ninth Egyptian Plague (Exod. x. 21-23).

11. **their pains and their sores:** due to the first and subsequent Bowls, not to the darkness. The judgements 'are cumulative, not simply successive.'

xvi. 12-16. *The sixth Bowl.*

12. **the river Euphrates.** The sounding of the sixth Trumpet (ix. 13 ff.) also sets in motion armed forces at or beyond the Euphrates. Here, by the drying up of the same river, the way is made open for **the kings that come from the sunrising.** The prediction is still concerned with the Roman empire, and is shaped by an anticipation of what is to follow in chap. xvii (verses 11-18). The kings, in all probability, stand for those Parthian rulers in alliance with whom Nero was to return from the East to destroy Rome, and challenge the forces of God to a final conflict. See below on xvii. 12.

13. **I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, &c.** Observe, as indicative of the plasticity of the apocalyptic method, that the presence of 'the beast' and of 'the false prophet' upon the scene is inferred in continuance from chap. xiii, while it is only here for the first time that the writer refers to the dragon as 'seen' by himself.

**the false prophet:** i. e. the second Monster of xiii. 11 f., where see note ; cf. xix. 20, xx. 10.

**unclean spirits.** The parallel to these is probably to be found not in the gospels, where the emphasis is on the character of the spirits as unclean, but in 1 Tim. iv. 1 ('seducing spirits'), and 1 John iv. 3 ('the spirit of Antichrist'). These figures represent the spiritual influence of the three forces, or their power to inspire others to evil.

**as it were frogs.** 'In the entire absence of Scripture symbolism—for the only mention of frogs besides this is in, or

of devils, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.) And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon.

in regard to, the relation of the plague in Egypt—we can only explain the similitude from the uncleanness, and the pertinacious noise, of the frog' (Alford).

**14. they are spirits of devils** (Gr. 'demons'). Holtzmann and others would render, 'there are spirits,' &c.; but the remark would be curiously otiose at this point.

**the kings of the whole world.** These are not identical with, though they include, the kings 'from the sunrising' (verse 12). This is probably another case where the writer has first adopted a trait from traditional eschatology, and then expanded it to be universal.

**the great day of God.** Cf. vi. 17, 'the great day of their wrath,' and note.

**15.** The speaker is the one who spoke to John at the first, i. 17 ff., and the thought is an expansion of iii. 3.

**as a thief.** Cf. iii. 3; 1 Thess. v. 2, 4; 2 Pet. iii. 10; and especially Matt. xxiv. 38-44.

**Blessed.** Cf. Matt. xxiv. 46, 'Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.'

**keepeth his garments, &c.:** cf. iii. 18, vii. 14. The thought is that the watcher is ready against the most sudden summons; it is not likely that any spiritual interpretation of the 'garments' is immediately intended.

**16.** The previous verse being in effect a parenthesis (so in the R. V.), this one takes up the close of verse 14.

**the place which is called . . . Har-Magedon.** The precision of the phrase introducing the name suggests that the writer had an actual locality in view; and it has been generally understood that he refers to the Plain of Esdraelon, at one end of which stood Megiddo (see G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, chap. xix). This was 'the classic battleground of Scripture,' and, in particular, the scene of the great victory over Sisera, celebrated in the Song of Deborah (Judges v). It has been felt as a difficulty by some that the name means *Hill* of Megiddo, whereas it was the 'plain,' on the edge of which it lay, which was the immemorial battleground. But, as Nestle has pointed out

And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; 17 and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done: and there were 18 lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the 19 cities of the nations fell: and 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. And 20

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(Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, sub voc.), 'in the very context of Judges v "Mount Tabor" and "the high places of the field" are mentioned.' The choice of this title for the plain may arise from a reminiscence of the words in Isa. xiv. 13, put into the mouth of the king of Babylon ('I will sit upon the mount of congregation—*har-mô'ed*—in the uttermost parts of the north'). Whatever be the historical ground of the name, it is to this spot that 'the kings of the whole world' are to be gathered together for the final struggle with the armies of God. See xix. 19.

in Hebrew. Cf. ix. 11 (note), xx. 16.

xvi. 17-21. *The seventh Bowl.*

**17. a great voice:** the voice of God, as in verse 1.

**out of the temple, from the throne.** The heavenly throne and the heavenly temple, which alternate with one another as the background of the visions (cf. iv and viii), are here combined.

**It is done:** so in xxi. 6. The declaration refers both to the close of the cycle of the Bowls, and to the fact that these complete the preparation for the judgement.

**18. lightnings, and voices, and thunders:** as in viii. 5 and xi. 19 (close of the Trumpets).

**earthquake:** as in vi. 12, after the sixth Seal, viii. 5, after the casting of fire on the earth, and xi. 19, after the seventh Trumpet; here, however, it is described with special emphasis and detail.

**19. the great city.** Cf. xi. 8, but here it is Rome that is meant, as appears below.

**and Babylon the great:** Rome, as in xiv. 8.

**was remembered, &c.** (cf. Acts x. 31). Her fall has already been heralded in xiv. 8, and is to be described in chap. xvii; here it is announced and traced to its source.

**the cup of the wine.** See xiv. 10, and note.

- every island fled away, and the mountains were not  
 21 found. And great hail, *every stone* about the weight of  
 a talent, cometh down out of heaven upon men: and  
 men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail;  
 for the plague thereof is exceeding great.
17. And there came one of the seven angels that had the  
 seven bowls, and spake with me, saying, Come hither, I  
 will shew thee the judgement of the great harlot that  
 2 sitteth upon many waters; with whom the kings of the  
 earth committed fornication, and they that dwell in the

20. *every island, &c.* See vi. 14, xx. 11.

21. *great hail.* Here the seventh Bowl comes into parallelism with the seventh Trumpet (xi. 19) and with the seventh of the Egyptian Plagues (Exod. ix. 18-26).

*men blasphemed God, &c.*: so in xvi. 9, 11. The effect even of this judgement is still only to harden the hearts of the determined worshippers of the Beast.

#### xvii. THE JUDGEMENT OF ROME UNDER THE FIGURE OF THE 'GREAT HARLOT.'

That which has been predicted in a compendious and anticipative way in xiv. 8, xvi. 19, is now to be described in detail.

xvii. 1-6. *The vision of the harlot upon the Beast.*

1. *the judgement of the great harlot.* In verse 5 we learn that her name is a mystery, is 'Babylon,' and in verse 9 that she 'sitteth upon seven mountains'; and it is generally admitted that she represents Rome, the centre of the world's hostility against the church, as Babylon had been the centre and representative of its enmity against the Jews. The comparison is found already in 1 Pet. v. 13 (probably), and subsequently in the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (lxvii. 7) and in the *Sibylline Oracles*.

It is no objection to this identification of Rome with Babylon that this woman is described as one **that sitteth upon many waters**. This feature, with those of the next verse, belongs to the O. T. description of the city (whether Babylon or Tyre or Nineveh) which stood for the personification of iniquity. Thus Jer. li. 13, 'O thou [Babylon] that dwellest upon many waters, . . . thine end is come.' See below, verse 15.

2. *with whom the kings of the earth, &c.* In Isa. xxiii. 17 it is said of Tyre, she 'shall play the harlot with all the kingdoms

earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication. And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication,

of the world'; and in Nahum iii. 4 Nineveh is described as 'the well-favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms.' It would be quite out of place to find here any allusion to the corruptions or unfaithfulness of the church, based upon the well-known language of Hosea and parallels: like all the figures of this book, the 'Scarlet Woman' has had more than one historical antitype; but what the writer had in view was not papal but pagan Rome.

**drunken with the wine, &c.:** cf. xiv. 8. The image is from Jer. li. 7, 'Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken.'

**3. in the Spirit:** so at i. 10, and iv. 1. In each case the writer connects with a special condition of ecstasy his perception of a vision of particular impressiveness.

**into a wilderness.** The best explanation of this curious setting for a vision of Rome or Babylon is found on a comparison with Isa. xxi. The prophet's oracle upon Babylon, which was plainly before the mind of John, bears the curious title, 'Burden of the desert of the sea,' but in the LXX version 'the vision of the wilderness,' and in the first verse the same word 'wilderness' is repeated three times; it was in 'a wilderness' therefore that this N. T. prophet sees his vision of the Babylon of his day.

**upon a scarlet-coloured beast.** The 'beast' is, as in xiii. 1-10, the political power of Rome, particularly as incarnate in Cæsar-worship; its 'scarlet' (= 'purple') colouring indicates not cruelty and blood (vi. 4), but the luxury and pomp of the imperial city; the 'names of blasphemy' (xiii. 1) recall the imperial titles, 'Divine Augustus,' &c., not only borne by the emperors, but recorded a thousand times on temples, statues, coins, and so forth, so that the empire was 'full' of them.

**having seven heads and ten horns:** interpreted below, verses 9, 12.

**4. Further description of the luxury and splendour of Rome. a golden cup.** Cf. Jer. li. 7.

5 and upon her forehead a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON  
 THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE  
 6 ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman  
 drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood  
 of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered  
 7 with a great wonder. And the angel said unto me,  
 Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the  
 mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her,  
 8 which hath the seven heads and the ten horns. The  
 beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to

**5. upon her forehead:** i. e. possibly, upon the head-dress. The commentators quote from Seneca: 'Stetisti puella in lupanari: nomen tuum pependit a fronte; pretia stupri accepisti'; cf. Juv. *Sat.* vi. 123.

**mystery:** see i. 20, note. The word, whether it be part of the inscription or not, calls attention to the metaphorical character of the title which follows.

**and of the abominations of the earth.** All the iniquities of the known world flowed towards Rome as to a *sentina gentium*, and with the descriptions of Tacitus and Juvenal before us, it is not difficult to understand the propriety even of this invective: cf. Tac. *Ann.* xv. 44: 'Rome, where all kinds of enormity and filthy shame meet together and become fashionable.'

**8. drunken with the blood of the saints.** The reference is to the wild orgies of persecution, especially of that Neronian persecution described by Tacitus, as above: 'A vast multitude was convicted not so much of arson as of hatred of the human race. And they were not only put to death, but put to death with insult, in that they were either dressed up in the skins of beasts to perish by the worrying of dogs, or else put on crosses to be set on fire, and, when the daylight failed, to be burnt as lights by night.' There is nothing in the known history of Jerusalem to justify such a phrase as a description of that city. No distinction can be drawn between 'the saints' and 'the martyrs (*lit.* 'witnesses') of Jesus'; the same people are indicated under two aspects.

**I wondered with a great wonder.** Cf. Jer. i. 13, li. 37, 41. The Seer is astonished at the iniquity, as the prophet at the fall, of 'Babylon.'

xvii. 7-18. *The interpretation of the 'mystery.'*

**8. The beast . . . was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss.** The vision which is based on an intensely

come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, *they* whose name hath not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come. Here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads <sup>9</sup> are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth: and <sup>10</sup> they are seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the

vivid realization of Rome in its actual condition, is interpreted as predicting a situation which has not yet arisen, but must shortly come to pass. The Beast, which in the vision was a general figure for the imperial power, is interpreted of one personality in whom that power had once lodged and through whom it should again be exercised; and there is little reason to doubt that the form which the prediction takes is moulded by the expectation of a return of Nero to life and power. In fact, the 'wounded head' of xiii. 3 here appears as the Beast himself. On the whole subject see Introduction, p. 56 ff.

**out of the abyss.** So xi. 7, and note at ix. 1.

**perdition.** The fulfilment of the prediction is described at xix. 20. The word is the same as that used by our Lord in Matt. vii. 13, 'Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction'; and the translators both of the A. V. and R. V. vary the rendering between 'perdition' and 'destruction' for no very clear reason. See Massie's article on the word in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.

**whose name, &c.** Cf. xiii. 8, and note.

**9. Here is the mind which hath wisdom.** An expression of the phrase in xiii. 18, q. v.: the meaning of these things is plain not to all, but to the truly wise.

**seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.** The reference to Rome, 'the city of seven hills,' is unmistakable. Allusions to these are common in classical writers (e. g. Virgil, *Aen.* vi. 782; Horace, *Car. Sec.* 7; Martial, iv. 64).

**10. and they are seven kings.** It is best to recognize a double interpretation here: the woman-city is planted upon seven hills, but also sustained by seven kings, which are represented by seven heads of the imperial monster.

**the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come.** Plainly the writer represents himself as living in the reign of the sixth, *scil.* of the sixth Roman emperor; and it might be thought a simple matter to ascertain in this way the date of the composition of the book or, at least, of this passage. But again different results are arrived at, according as we begin with Cæsar or Augustus, and

other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must  
 11 continue a little while. And the beast that was, and is  
 not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and  
 12 he goeth into perdition. And the ten horns that thou  
 sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as  
 yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast,  
 13 for one hour. These have one mind, and they give  
 14 their power and authority unto the beast. These shall  
 war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome

according as we reckon or omit the questionable reigns of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. The most probable theory sees in the five, who 'have fallen,' Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero; in the one who 'is,' Vespasian (A. D. 69-79), and in the one who 'is not yet come,' who is to continue only 'a little while,' Titus. It is hardly possible that Galba, whose reign only lasted eight months, could be recognized in the Province of Asia as 'he that is.' On the bearing of the passage upon the date of the book see the Introduction, p. 53.

11. Observe, as characteristic of the way in which apocalyptic figures dissolve into one another, that the 'beast' and 'the eighth' of his own heads are plainly identified together. If the seventh is Titus, it is after the close of his reign that the return of Nero, who had been one 'of the seven,' is looked for; or, if the book including this passage were of later date, then the Apostle recognizes in Domitian a replica of Nero, and in that sense a fulfilment of the expectation of Nero's return. For this there is quite sufficient ground, both in the character of Domitian and in his treatment of the Christians (cf. Tertullian, *Apology*, chap. vii; and Juvenal, iv. 38).

12. the ten horns. The same image as in chap. xiii, but with a different interpretation. The horns are now 'ten kings which have received no kingdoms as yet,' but are to share the brief authority of the 'beast.' They cannot, therefore, find their anti-types in any of the Roman emperors, but most probably represent the Parthian rulers, the independent 'satraps,' at whose head Nero was to return, the 'kings from the sunrising' of xvi. 12. Their power, like that of the Beast, is to be for one hour, i. e. of the briefest duration, because 'the time is short,' and the end close at hand.

14. Whatever forms the writer expects these forces to take on the plane of history, he sees them also as independent of all form—the forces of spiritual evil arrayed against the Lamb, the representative of Divine grace and righteousness. Behind every

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. And he saith unto me, The waters <sup>15</sup> which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten <sup>16</sup> horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire.

conflict in time there is the conflict that has been waged in heaven, waged and won by the Lamb; and the victory which awaits the church in the struggle with the Beast is part of, and rests upon, the eternal victory in heaven.

**Lord of lords, and King of kings:** cf. xix. 16. The title 'God of gods, and Lord of lords' is given to the Most High in Deut. x. 17; cf. also Dan. ii. 47; Ps. cxxxvi. 3.

**and they also shall overcome:** so the R. V., supplying the verb from the first part of the verse. Christ's victory is theirs, who are not only called and chosen, but faithful to their heavenly calling; cf. 1 John v. 4.

**15.** That feature in the picture of Babylon-Rome (verse 1) which belongs to the natural Babylon is now interpreted; the **waters**, whereon she sits, are to be understood of the many nations over which Rome holds sway; cf. verse 18 below.

**16. the ten horns, &c.:** see above, verse 10. Allusion is here made to that part of the expectation concerning Nero which represented him as about to return in bitter hatred and indignation against the imperial city, where his own subjects had risen against him and (actually or apparently) done him to death. The destruction of the Harlot-city is to be accomplished through the instrumentality of the forces of evil themselves; by 'the wicked which is thy sword' (Ps. xvii. 13, marg.).

**shall make her desolate and naked:** strip her of the pomp described in verse 4. 'Her former lovers shall no longer frequent her, nor answer to her call: her rich adornments shall be stripped off. She shall lose, at the hands of those whom she formerly seduced with her cup of fornication, both her spiritual power over them, and her temporal power to adorn herself.' So Alford, who takes the Harlot to represent not pagan, but papal Rome. That we find an earlier application of the prophecy does not preclude our seeing other and later fulfilments of it. What is here 'unveiled' is the principle of Divine judgement and the certainty of Divine victory.

**shall eat . . . shall burn.** The one applies to the figure of the Woman, the other to the city she represents.

- 17 For God did put in their hearts to do his mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished.
- 18 And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.
- 18 After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of devils, and a hold of every

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**17. For God did put in their hearts, &c.** This also 'cometh from the Lord'; the policy even of those who are His enemies is governed by His will. Even in this book, where the struggle between good and evil is revealed as a 'war in heaven,' there is no trace of dualism. God is all in all, and worketh all things, even the machinations of evil, 'according to the purpose of His will.'

**until the words of God should be accomplished:** cf. x. 7. The 'words' are prophetic oracles, probably those in the context referring to the destruction of the city.

**18. which reigneth over the kings of the earth.** This can refer only to Rome—by no stretch of imagination to Jerusalem, or to the corrupted Christian church. Alford quotes: 'Septem urbs alta iugis toto quae praesidet orbi.'

#### xviii—xix. 10. THE JUDGEMENT OF BABYLON-ROME, WITH THE LAMENTATIONS AND THE THANKSGIVINGS OVER HER FALL.

xviii. 1-3. *Announcement of her fall.* The fall, which has been announced predictively in xiv. 8 and chap. xvii, is now described as accomplished, and its issues variously celebrated.

**1. another angel.** It is neither necessary nor important to ascertain with whom this angel is contrasted; it is the angel to whom this function is committed; cf. xiv. 6.

**authority.** Cf. xiii. 2 (of the beast); vi. 8 note.

**was lightened with his glory.** From Ezek. xliii. 2, 'The earth shined with his glory.'

**2. Fallen, fallen.** From Isa. xxi. 9; cf. xiv. 8.

**a habitation of devils:** or 'demons.' A similar fate is predicted of Babylon in Isa. xliii. 21, and of Edom in Isa. xxxiv. 13-15; only the figures which there verge towards the ghostly or supernatural here become plainly so. See articles 'Demon,' and 'Lilith' in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.

unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird. For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication 3 all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come 4 forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: for 5 her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Render unto her even as 6

**a hold.** The same word is used in 1 Pet. iii. 19, 'the spirits in prison.'

**3. all the nations, &c.** So already in xiv. 8.

**the kings of the earth, &c.** So xvii. 2.

**the merchants of the earth waxed rich.** See Ezekiel's description of the commerce and luxury of Tyre (xxvii. 9-27), and below, verse 11.

**wantonness:** marg. 'luxury.' In 1 Tim. v. 11 we have a verb compounded from this substantive; 'when they have waxed wanton,' see below, in verse 7.

xviii. 4-8. *Summons to God's people to come out from the doomed city.*

**4. another voice:** probably the voice of another angel.

**Come forth, my people, out of her.** From Jer. li. 45, 'My people, go ye out of the midst of her.' Cf. also Jer. l. 8, li. 6; and our Lord's command in Matt. xxiv. 16. The fear 'in the case of God's servants remaining in her, would be twofold: (1) Lest by over-persuasion or guilty conformity they should become accomplices in any of her crimes; (2) lest by being in and of her, they should, though the former may not have been the case, share in her punishment' (Alford).

**5. have reached:** the word (*lit.* 'have been fastened together') seems to mean 'have accumulated into a heap so high as to reach.' Cf. Jer. li. 9.

**6. Render unto her, &c.** This command is given not to the people of God, but to those appointed to execute the judgement, either to angelic ministers of wrath, or possibly to the Beast and his allies.

**even as she rendered.** The R.V. omits 'you.' The same comparison is found in Ps. cxxxvii. 8: cf. also the 'word concerning Babylon' in Jer. l. 15, 29.

she rendered, and double *unto her* the double according to her works: in the cup which she mingled, mingle 7 unto her double. How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton, so much give her of torment and mourning: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning. 8 Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God which judged her. 9 And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning,

**double** unto her. Cf. Jer. xvi. 18 (of Jerusalem), 'I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double.' There is a striking contrast with the gracious promise of Isa. xl. 2.

**in the cup, &c.** Cf. xiv. 8, xvii. 4; the iniquities with which she filled her cup are now turned into 'the wine of the wrath of God.'

7. There is still a balancing between her conduct and her fate, as is brought out in the R. V.; the transition from the height of luxury to the depth of degradation is illustrated in Isa. iii. 16-26.

**for she saith in her heart, &c.** Cf. Isa. xlvii. 5, 7, and especially 8, 'Thou [Babylon] . . . that sayest in thine heart, I am, and there is none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children.'

8. Isaiah's prophecy upon Babylon is still the groundwork of this prediction: xlvii. 9, 'These two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood.'

**utterly burned with fire.** Repeated from xvii. 16.

**strong is the Lord God.** Cf. Jer. l. 34.

xviii. 9-19. *Lamentation of those who were 'partakers of her sins.'* As the preceding section is largely coloured by reminiscences of Isaiah, so this depends closely on Ezekiel's description of the judgement of Tyre (chaps. xxvi, xxvii).

9. The order of the words emphasizes first the lamentation; = 'there shall be weeping and lamentation over her by the kings,' &c.

**the kings of the earth, &c.** See xvii. 2, xviii. 3.

**the smoke of her burning.** So in verse 18; there is doubt-

standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, 10  
 woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! for in one  
 hour is thy judgement come. And the merchants of the 11  
 earth weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their  
 merchandise any more; merchandise of gold, and silver, 12  
 and precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple,  
 and silk, and scarlet; and all thyine wood, and every vessel  
 of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood,  
 and of brass, and iron, and marble; and cinnamon, and 13  
 spice, and incense, and ointment, and frankincense,  
 and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle,  
 and sheep; and *merchandise* of horses and chariots and  
 slaves; and souls of men. And the fruits which thy 14

less an allusion to the destruction of Sodom, when 'the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace' (Gen. xix. 28).

11. After the kings, **the merchants**. Cf. Ezek. xxvii. 36. The difficulty felt by some that Rome has never been a great commercial city rests, partly, upon a very artificial distinction between Rome and its harbour and emporium at Ostia, and, partly, on a prosaic literalness of interpretation quite out of place in a passage of marked poetic character, and indeed in this book altogether.

**merchandise**: *lit.* 'cargo,' 'lading.'

12. **thyine wood**: i. e. all kinds of scented wood, whether for burning or for furnishing, e. g. citron, cedar, and sandal wood.

13. **spice**: rather, 'unguent.' Martial wishes for his friend that his hair 'may be ever glossy with Assyrian unguent.' We have here, in fact, a catalogue of the 'Persian gear' which Horace affected to despise.

**chariots**: a rare word, said to be of Gallic origin, for a carriage with four wheels. This item finds no parallel in Ezekiel, neither do those which follow.

**slaves**. The word means literally 'bodies,' then 'persons,' and then (in LXX and subsequently) 'slaves.' See Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, p. 160. Wetstein suggests 'gladiators.'

**souls of men**: marg. 'lives.' But it is possible to read a too modern meaning into either phrase. It is a rendering of the phrase in Ezek. xxvii. 13, 'They traded the persons of men'; cf. Gen. xxxvi. 6, 'All the souls of his house.' The construction

soul lusted after are gone from thee, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are perished from thee, and  
 15 *men* shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning;  
 16 saying, Woe, woe, the great city, she that was arrayed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with gold  
 17 and precious stone and pearl! for in one hour so great riches is made desolate. And every shipmaster, and every one that saileth any whither, and mariners, and as  
 18 many as gain their living by sea, stood afar off, and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying,  
 19 What *city* is like the great city? And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein were made rich all that had their ships in the sea by reason of her costliness!

marks a distinction between the 'horses and chariots and slaves' and what comes before and after. Possibly we should see here additional items which distinguish Rome from her O.T. representative, Tyre.

14. The description passes over into direct address, probably by the writer himself, who, like Ezekiel, 'takes up a lamentation' on the city.

**the fruits which thy soul lusted after:** *lit.* 'the harvest of the desire of thy soul.'

15. **The merchants.** They, too, like the kings (verse 10), 'stand afar off' and lament.

16. **arrayed, &c.** See xvii. 4.

17. **every shipmaster, &c.** See Ezek. xxvii. 27-30. There is the same attempt here to enumerate all classes of those who 'occupy their business in great waters.'

18. **What city is like the great city?** So in Ezek. xxvii. 32, 'Who is there like Tyre?'

19. The description is from the same passage, Ezek. xxvii. 30.

It is difficult to doubt, after examining this description, that the Apostle had a real city in view; whatever spiritual application we may give to it is not the primary, but a secondary interpretation.

for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, 20  
thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye  
prophets; for God hath judged your judgement on her.

And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great 21  
millstone; and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a  
mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down,  
and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of 22  
harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters  
shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman,  
of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in  
thee; and the voice of a millstone shall be heard no  
more at all in thee; and the light of a lamp shall shine 23  
no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom  
and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee:  
for thy merchants were the princes of the earth; for  
with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived. And in 24

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xviii. 20-24. *Rejoicing in heaven as a counterpart to the lamentation on earth.*

**20. thou heaven.** The thought is found in Jer. li. 48, 'Then the heaven and the earth . . . shall sing for joy over Babylon'; the form has parallels in Deut. xxxii. 43; Isa. xlv. 23.

**God hath judged your judgement.** The judgement upon Babylon was judgement in favour of the believers in Christ, an answer to the prayer of the martyr-souls below the altar (vi. 9), and indeed to the prayers of God's people at all times in face of wickedness and persecution (Ps. xliii. 1).

**21. a stone as it were a great millstone.** See Jer. li. 63, 64, where the prediction of Babylon's fall follows similarly upon the description of its details.

**22. Cf. Ezek. xxvi. 13 [of Tyre],** 'I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard'; also Isa. xiv. 11: **the voice of a millstone**; so in Jer. xxv. 10, 'I will take from them . . . the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.'

**23. the voice of the bridegroom, &c.** See Jeremiah as above, and also vii. 34, xvi. 9, xxxiii. 11.

**princes.** See vi. 15.

**thy sorcery.** Sorcery and enchantments are laid to the charge of Babylon in Isa. xlvii. 12; cf. also Nahum iii. 4.

her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

- 10 After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God: for true and righteous are his judgements; for he hath judged

**24. in her was found the blood, &c.** Cf. Ezek. xxiv. 6, 'Woe to the bloody city [Babylon] . . . For her blood is in the midst of her'; Jer. li. 35. But the sin of the new Babylon is yet wider and deeper; she is 'drunken with the blood' of the saints.

**all that have been slain upon the earth.** Cf. Jer. li. 49. Either the language is that of hyperbole, or the representative city of wickedness becomes a figure for all the 'habitation of cruelty,' and is made responsible for all the blood that has been unrighteously shed.

**xix. 1-9.** *The praises of heaven for the judgement of the Woman, leading to its heavenly counterpart, the marriage of the Lamb.* The writer pursues the method with which we are already familiar, setting over against the dark picture of the last two chapters one of brightness and heavenly glory. The praises of the heavenly host are heard again, which have already marked the readiness of the Lamb to open the book (v. 9 ff.), the appearance of the 'great multitude' (vii. 16 ff.), the sounding of the seventh Trumpet (xi. 15 ff.), the beginning of the Bowls (xv. 3), and the pouring of the third Bowl (xvi. 5 ff.).

Bousset points out that those who find different documents in the book have not succeeded in coming to any agreement or established result in their criticism of these verses, which he claims without hesitation for the author himself. The writer here shews plainly his method. His material is collected from many various directions, but he weaves it into a homogeneous whole.

**1. a great multitude in heaven.** Cf. verse 6, and vii. 9.

**Hallelujah.** The word occurs only here and in verses 4 and 6 in the N. T. It is common in the psalms, where however it is translated (A. V. and R. V.) 'Praise ye the Lord'; e. g. the closing verses of Pss. civ, cv, cvi.

**Salvation.** This and the following substantives have the article, as in vii. 12 and elsewhere. It is the salvation which men look for, the positive blessedness which comes from, because it belongs to, God.

**2. true and righteous are his judgements.** So xv. 3, xvi. 7.

the great harlot, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and he hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And a second time they say, Hallelujah. 3 And her smoke goeth up for ever and ever. And the 4 four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah. And a voice came forth 5 from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye his servants, ye that fear him, the small and the great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, 6 and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be 7 exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath

**hath avenged, &c.:** *lit.* 'hath exacted in vengeance the blood.'

*Cf.* 2 Kings ix. 7; Deut. xxxii. 43.

**3. her smoke.** *Cf.* xviii. 9, xiv. 11; Isa. xxxiv. 10.

**4. the four and twenty elders, &c.** *Cf.* iv. 11, v. 8, 14, xi. 16.

**5.** The voice comes not 'out of,' but from the direction of, **the throne.** There is nothing to indicate who is the speaker, but the words are not likely to be spoken by the Lord.

**Give praise to our God, &c.:** the phrases are familiar in the Psalms, e. g. cxiii. 1, cxxxiv. 1, cxxxv. 20.

**6.** The same imagery is found already in i. 15, xiv. 2, vi. 1, xiv. 2. **the Almighty.** See i. 8, xi. 17.

**7. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad.** The same two words are combined in Matt. v. 12.

**the marriage of the Lamb.** The writer here introduces, in a characteristic way, a thought which is to be treated with greater elaboration later on. These words 'introduce to us transitionally a new series of visions respecting the final consummation of the vision between Christ and his church, which brings about the end (xxi. 1 ff.). This series, properly speaking, includes in itself the overthrow of the kings of the earth, the binding of Satan, the thousand years' reign, the loosing of Satan, the final overthrow of the enemy, and the general judgement: but is not consummated except in the entire union of Christ and his church with which the book concludes.'

**his wife:** the bride of the Messiah is the New Jerusalem.

8 made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright *and* pure: for 9 the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he 10 saith unto me, These are true words of God. And I

The figure, of course, has its foundation in the O. T. representation of Jehovah as 'married' to His people; see Hos. ii. 19; Isa. liv. 1-8; Ezek. xvi. 7. In 4 Ezra ix Sion appears as the bride of God; in more than one of our Lord's parables the kingdom of heaven is set forth under the figure of a marriage feast; and in the Epistle to the Ephesians (v. 23 ff.) Paul presses home the meaning of the same figure. Here it provides the climax of the imagery of this book. 'The Lamb is come to claim his bride, and his wife hath made herself ready. She has been long betrothed, and has been waiting for the bridegroom. Through storm and calm, through sorrow and joy, through darkness and light, she has waited for him, crying ever and again, "Come quickly!" At last he comes, and the marriage and the marriage supper are to take place' (Milligan).

**8. bright and pure.** There is an obvious contrast with the description of the Woman at the beginning of chap. xviii.

**is.** Observe the use of this word for 'represents'; cf. Gal. iv. 25; Matt. xxvi. 26.

**the righteous acts:** so Grimm, Bousset, Milligan, and Holtzmann who compares Rom. v. 18, and sees an antithesis to 'her sins' (= 'unrighteous acts') in xviii. 5. Alford, translating 'righteousness,' understands their pure and holy state attained by their having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

**9. he saith unto me.** Again we cannot say who speaks, but evidently it is an angel, and possibly the one mentioned in xvii. 1.

**they which are bidden:** cf. Matt. xxii. 3; Luke xiv. 8 ff. The bride is of course, from one point of view, the sum of the guests who are bidden, 'the called, chosen, and faithful' of xvii. 14.

**These are true words of God.** Many good authorities omit 'of God,' which may be an early gloss. See xxi. 5.

This verse and the following one sound like a conclusion of the writer's work, and by some critics have been taken to mark the end of one of the documents of which they believe the book to be composed. But we have already seen in xiv. 12, 13 a passage where the work seems similarly to sink to rest; here

fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

also the section is followed by a new opening of the future, and a further upward sweep towards the end.

xix. 10. *The Apostle withheld from worshipping the angel.* See also xxii. 8, 9.

**10. I fell down before his feet.** The action is due not to what immediately precedes, nor to any conscious intention of the Seer to offer to the angel worship that is due to God only, but to the overwhelming impression of the whole foregoing vision. This natural impulse is checked, however, by the angel reminding John that he is but a 'minister of God to do His pleasure,' like the prophets and saints themselves. It has been supposed by some that we have in this incident (which is repeated at xxii. 8) a protest against the incipient worship of angels which was creeping into the church; cf. Col. ii. 18, with Abbott's note there. Traces of the same protest may also be found in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

**with thy brethren:** in xxii. 9 these are further defined as 'the prophets.'

**that hold the testimony of Jesus.** It is difficult to decide whether this is to be understood *objectively* = the testimony they bear to Jesus, or *subjectively* = the testimony borne by Jesus. The latter is probably to be preferred; the 'testimony of Jesus' is the sum of the revelation made by him; this is the 'fair deposit' which Timothy was to guard (2 Tim. i. 14), and the holding of which is so often in this book the sign-manual of the saints; cf. i. 2, 9, vi. 9, xii. 17.

**worship God.** Cf. Matt. iv. 10; Deut. vi. 13.

**the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.** This difficult phrase is much more easily interpreted on the understanding of the first words given above; the 'spirit of prophecy' is not the organ of unregulated fantasy, but related to, and governed by, the truth which is in Jesus; the latter is the norm and the criterion of the former.

#### xix. 11—xxii. 5. THE CULMINATION AND THE FINAL CRISIS OF JUDGEMENT AND REDEMPTION.

This is the closing section of the book, in which all the foregoing anticipative predictions are gathered up and repeated in a presentation of the end of this present world, with the final

- 11 And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white  
 horse, and he that sat thereon, called Faithful and True;  
 12 and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And  
 his eyes *are* a flame of fire, and upon his head *are* many  
 diadems; and he hath a name written, which no one  
 13 knoweth but he himself. And he *is* arrayed in a garment  
 sprinkled with blood: and his name is called The Word

destruction of wickedness, and the establishment of the redeemed society of God. It falls into five sections, of which the first is—

xix. 11-21. *The victory of Christ and his angels over the Beast and the kings of the earth.*

**11. I saw the heaven opened, &c.:** cf. vi. 2. Here the figure can be that of Christ and Christ alone.

**Faithful and True.** Cf. i. 5, iii. 7, 14.

**in righteousness.** Cf. Isa. xi. 4, 'With righteousness shall he judge the poor,' &c.

**12. are a flame of fire (i. 14), and upon his head are many diadems.** If there is any distinction to be drawn between the words, the 'diadem' signifies inherent royalty and authority, whilst the 'crown' is bestowed (vi. 2) as a symbol of expected or achieved victory.

**a name written, which no one knoweth but he himself:** cf. ii. 17, iii. 12. The first passage illustrates the importance and significance of the 'name,' the second its belonging to Christ. This name, therefore, is not that to be mentioned in the next verse, but another, a 'name of power,' which is indeed 'not known.' Cf. Acts iv. 7, 12; Phil. ii. 9, 10.

**13. sprinkled with:** for A. V. 'dipped in.' But there is very good MS. authority for the latter; both forms of the idea are found in Isa. lxiii. 1, 3, from which it is clear that the primary reference is to the blood of his enemies; that does not, however, exclude the possibility of a reference to the fact that this conqueror overcomes by the shedding of his own blood.

**his name is called The Word of God.** The 'Word' is the specifically Johannine description of Him that was 'from the beginning,' used in reference to a person only here and in John i. 1 ff. This passage therefore forms a notable link between the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel. 'In Philo "Logos" is the name directly given to God, but in John i. 1-18 this "Logos" had become the transcendental name of Christ. This passage seems therefore to be connected with the Johannine Logos-doctrine, were it only in the form of a mysterious indication of the

of God. And the armies which are in heaven followed <sup>14</sup> him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white *and* pure. And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, <sup>15</sup> that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name <sup>16</sup> written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried <sup>17</sup>

watchword of the new theology. In any case it contains the idea of pre-existence' (*Vorweltlichkeit*). So Holtzmann, with whom Beyschlag, Weizsäcker, and Bousset agree.

**14. the armies which are in heaven.** Though the saints may be included as spectators and partakers of the victory (xvii. 14), the warring host is the angelic host of heaven.

**white.** The colour both of the horses and of the garments is the symbol of victory.

**15. a sharp sword:** see i. 16, ii. 12; and cf. especially Heb. iv. 12. In the Psalms of Solomon (xvii. 27, 39) 'it is particularly to be observed that the Messiah overthrows his enemies by the mere word of his mouth' (Schürer).

**smite the nations:** cf. Isa. xi. 4, 'He shall smite the earth with the rod (LXX, 'the word') of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked'; John xii. 48.

**he shall rule them with a rod of iron:** from Ps. ii. 9 (Messianic), as in ii. 27, xii. 5. 'He' in both clauses is emphatic, = 'he and no other.'

**treadeth the winepress, &c.:** from Isa. lxiii. 3; cf. xiv. 19, 20. Two ideas seem here to be in combination: the winepress of God's wrath, which is trodden, and the cup of God's wrath, which is mixed for the wicked; cf. xiv. 10, xvi. 19. The winepress trodden in judgement yields the cup of wrath which is mixed for the wicked.

**16. on his garment and on his thigh:** i. e. on his girdle.

**King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.** Cf. xvii. 14; 1 Tim. vi. 15. In the O. T. these are titles of the Most High. The closest parallel is in *Enoch*, ix. 4 (Sync.), 'And they said to the Lord of the ages, "Thou art the God of Gods, and Lord of Lords, and King of Kings."'

**17. in the sun.** 'Not only as the place of brightness and glory becoming the herald of so great a victory, but also as the central station in mid heaven for those to whom the call was to be made.'

with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, Come *and* be gathered together unto the  
 18 great supper of God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great.

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against  
 20 him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them

**in mid heaven.** Cf. viii. 13, xiv. 6.

**Come and be gathered together.** The whole passage is closely parallel to Ezek. xxxix. 17-20, 'Speak unto the birds of every sort, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice,' &c. There is once more a tragic contrast between this 'great supper' on the slain, and the 'marriage supper of the Lamb.'

**18. kings . . . captains . . . mighty men . . . horses . . . all men.** In Ezekiel, 'the mighty . . . princes . . . horses . . . mighty men . . . all men of war.' An instructive illustration of the way in which the Apostle uses his material.

**free and bond,** &c. See xiii. 16.

**19. the beast:** mentioned here for the first time since chap. xvii.

**gathered together to make war.** It is a heavenly host which has come forth to battle, but their foes are 'the beast' and 'the kings of the earth' (xvi. 14, xvii. 2, 18, xviii. 3); it is the final struggle of Armageddon, predicted in xvi. 16, that is here described.

**20. the beast was taken:** *lit.* 'laid hold of,' 'arrested.' The word is a favourite one with John, occurring eight times in the gospel (vii. 30, &c.), and otherwise thrice only in the N. T. (Acts and Colossians).

**and with him the false prophet.** The false prophet (xvi. 13) is the second 'beast' of xiii. 11 ff. (where see notes); probably it represents the organized priesthood of the Cæsar-worship, by whose imposture men were deceived, and by their persecution driven to worship the Beast.

that worshipped his image: they twain were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone: and 21 the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, *even the sword* which came forth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, 20 having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, 2

**the lake of fire.** Cf. xx. 10, 14, 15, xxi. 8. These are the only passages in which the figure occurs in this form. Elsewhere in the N. T. it is Gehenna (= 'Ge-Hinnom'), the valley of 'unquenchable fire' (Mark ix. 43, R. V.), which is the doom of the wicked; cf. 'the Gehenna of fire' (Matt. xviii. 9, v. 22 marg.), Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 5; the 'furnace of fire' (Matt. xiii. 42, 50). The physical basis of the figure is found in the valley of Hinnom, which had been the scene of abominable sacrifices, when Ahaz and Manasseh caused their children to pass through the fire 'to Moloch' (2 Kings xvi. 3, xxi. 6). These sacrifices were probably made on the 'high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom' (Jer. vii. 31, xxxii. 15). In Isa. xxx. 33 'Topheth' has already become a symbol of the burning judgement of God and the scene of its execution. On the whole subject see Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. 'Gehenna,' and W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 377. It is memories of Topheth and the valley of Hinnom, as well as of Sodom, from which N. T. writers draw the imagery of Hell. The destruction of the Beast by fire is found in Dan. vii. 11, 'I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed; and he was given to be burned with fire.'

**that burneth with brimstone.** Cf. xiv. 10, and Isa. xxx. 33.

**21. the rest:** i. e. the kings of the earth, and their armies who have accepted the rule of the Beast.

**with the sword.** See verse 15.

xx. 1-3. *The victory over Satan and his binding.*

**1. the key of the abyss:** see ix. 1, note. The 'abyss' is not represented as the place of final punishment, which is the 'lake of fire'; cf. xvii. 8.

**in his hand:** *lit.* 'upon his hand'; hanging from it, as in v. 1.

**2. the dragon, &c.** So already in xii. 3, 9 (note), xiii. 2, 4, xvi. 13.

which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and

for a thousand years. See below on verse 6.

3. he must be loosed: i. e. according to the determination of the Divine will.

xx. 4-6. *The millennial reign.*

4. I saw thrones: from Dan. vii. 9, 'I beheld till thrones were placed'; cf. Matt. xix. 28.

they sat upon them. Who? Some say 'the apostles,' as suggested by reference to Matthew above; others 'the saints,' comparing Dan. vii. 22, 'Judgement was given to the saints of the Most High'; and 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3. But though either of them is possible, there is no sufficient indication in the passage itself, and it is best to leave the description of these figures, as the Apostle leaves it, indefinite.

judgement was given unto them: i. e. authority to judge (cf. Dan. vii. 22). Their function being different from that of those who 'reign' with Christ, it is probable that they represent a different class.

I saw (supplied from the context) the souls . . . beheaded. This form of martyrdom is that which tradition ascribes to Paul. It would probably be the fate of those who were executed according to due form of law.

for the testimony of Jesus, &c.: i. e. 'because of, for the sake of, the revelation through Christ.' Cf. i. 9, and especially xii. 17 and xix. 10.

and such as worshipped not, &c. This describes another group, and as it is said of them also that they 'lived,' they too are to be reckoned of those who 'loved not their lives unto the death.' These had suffered martyrdom also rather than do homage to the Beast. Cf. xiii. 14-17.

they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

**they lived:** i. e. 'lived again,' or, 'were made alive'; cf. ii. 8; Rom. xiv. 9; Gal. v. 25.

**reigned with Christ a thousand years.** This is the only passage in the N. T. which clearly sets forth a doctrine of the Millennium, i. e. of a period in which 'Christ will reign in bodily presence upon earth for a thousand years.' Three elements in the expectation should be distinguished: (1) The personal reign of Christ on earth; (2) the duration of it, and (3) the persons who share in it.

(1) 'Outside of Revelation many interpreters find reference to a millennial kingdom in 1 Cor. xv. 23, 24, when St. Paul seems to distinguish between the *parousia* of Christ with the resurrection of the saints, and the end when he shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father.' They identify the apparent interval with the period of Christ's reign in the text, and further adduce Phil. iii. 11; 1 Thess. iv. 14-17; Luke xiv. 14, &c. The problem of the connexion of these passages and their interpretation, with the further problem of the reconciliation between this view of an (apparent) double return of Christ to earth and the view supported by many other passages (Matt. xiii. 39, xxv. 31-46; John v. 28, vi. 44; Acts xvii. 31, &c.), cannot be discussed here. Reference should be made to Briggs, *The Messiah of the Apostles*, p. 341 ff., and to Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, pp. 437 ff., 520, 561. The problem must be studied, however, in the light of a true understanding of this passage, and especially of the period indicated, and the persons who are to reign.

(2) The duration of Messiah's kingdom (on earth) was a favourite subject of speculation among the Jews, and was very variously reckoned; e. g. three generations, forty years, seventy years, a hundred years, four hundred years (4 Ezra vii. 28-32), a thousand years, &c. The reckoning of a thousand years was based on a combination of Gen. i and Ps. xc. 4; six millenniums of work were to be followed by one of rest. Whether or not the figure in the text rests upon these Jewish speculations, it must fall under the general rule that all such figures in this book have a symbolical, not a numerical, value. 'The fundamental principle to be kept clearly and resolutely in view is this: that the *thousand years* mentioned in this passage express no period of time. They are not a figure for the whole Christian era, now extending to nearly nineteen hundred years. Nor do they denote a certain space of time, longer or shorter, it may be, than the definite number of years spoken of, at the close of the present dispensation, and to be, in the view of some preceded, in the view of others followed, by the Second Advent of our Lord. They embody an idea; and that idea, whether applied to the subjugation of Satan or to the

5 The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years  
6 should be finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed  
and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection :

triumph of the saints, is the idea of completeness or perfection. Satan is bound for a thousand years ; that is, he is completely bound. The saints reign for a thousand years ; that is, they are introduced into a state of perfect and glorious victory' (Milligan).

(3) On the view taken above, it is the martyrs and the martyrs only who participate in this reign. It is held by many (e. g. Bousset, B. Weiss) that they also are included who, without having actually suffered martyrdom, have endured with constancy the presence and persecution of the Beast. But this involves giving a double meaning to 'they lived'; and in any case the emphasis is on the participation of the martyrs. A general resurrection and reign of 'the saints' can hardly be read into the passage.

On the whole subject see the articles on the 'Millennium' by Harnack in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and by W. A. Brown in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*.

5. The limitation of the 'first resurrection' to the martyrs is here emphasized from the negative side. **The rest of the dead lived not**, not even the saints who had died a peaceful death.

**This is the first resurrection.** Contrast 'the second death,' ii. 11, vi. 14, xxi. 8. Many commentators, basing their view on the fact that the N. T. (apart from this passage) 'knows of only one, and that a general, resurrection,' seek to avoid the apparent discrepancy by understanding the 'first resurrection' in a wholly spiritual sense, as equivalent to a resurrection 'from the death of sin to the life of righteousness.' This is indeed the theory accepted by most Roman Catholic theologians, from Augustine downwards, making this first resurrection a symbol of admission within the church, the sphere of safety from the evil one. To this there are two fatal objections: (1) This resurrection is plainly the reward or result of martyrdom, and follows not the beginning, but the end, of a Christian life on earth. (2) 'If in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean *spiritual* rising with Christ, while the second means *literal* rising from the grave, then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything' (Alford). Whatever may be the difficulties involved, and however they may have to be solved, we must recognize that John here predicts an anticipative and limited resurrection of the same character as the general resurrection which is to follow.

6. **Blessed and holy**, &c. See similar pronouncement in xiv. 13, xix. 9. The main purpose of the book is most plainly

over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the

manifest in such a passage as this, which is calculated to brace believers to meet persecution and even martyrdom with exalted courage,

**hath part.** A Johannine phrase; cf. John xiii. 8.

**the second death.** See verse 14, xxi. 8, and cf. Matt. x. 28, 'Be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell'; also Rom. vi. 9, 10.

**they shall be priests, &c.** See i. 6, v. 10, and cf. Isa. lxi. 6, 'Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord.' Once more Christ is set on a level with the Father in accordance with the whole Christology of this book.

*xx. 7-10. Loosing of Satan and final conflict.*

**7. the thousand years.** That the same period is described in verse 3 as 'a little season' confirms what has been said above concerning the interpretation of the 1000 years.

**Satan shall be loosed.** Those who believe that the 'first resurrection' is a spiritual one, and has already taken place, may maintain further that this prediction also has been fulfilled. Thus Milligan: 'Satan has been already loosed. Hardly was he completely conquered for the saints when he was loosed for the world.' From this point of view the Millennium is now in progress, a theory which, for many reasons, it is difficult to accept, and which involves the apparently insuperable objection that the thousand years of Christ's reign is not the thousand years of Satan's binding, but follows on his being loosed. Whatever secondary interpretation may be given to this passage, its primary meaning is a prediction of Christ's millennial reign on earth coinciding with the binding of Satan, and followed by a final outburst of Satan's power. See Salmond, Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, i. 755.

**8. to deceive.** Cf. verses 3, 10; John vii. 12, 47; 1 John i. 8, ii. 26.

**in the four corners of the earth.** Cf. vii. 1; Isa. xi. 12; Ezek. vii. 2.

**Gog and Magog.** In Ezekiel (xxxviii—xxxix), where these

war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.  
 9 And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and  
 compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved  
 city: and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured  
 10 them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into  
 the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast  
 and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day  
 and night for ever and ever.

names first occur, they stand for a 'prince' and the land (Magog) over which he rules; here they seem to stand for two peoples, representative of the lords of nations to be gathered under the banner of Satan. In later apocalyptic literature they are conventional symbols for the world hostile to Israel or the people of God. See Bousset's *Antichrist*, passim. Any attempt to identify them with historical kingdoms is futile.

**to gather them together to the war.** Cf. xvi. 14, xix. 19. Whether these 'gatherings to war' predict one and the same crisis, or successive manifestations of the same spirit, it is impossible to say. The former would be quite compatible with the writer's method of describing the future as he sees it.

**9. they went up over the breadth of the earth.** Bousset compares *Enoch*, lvi. 5 (where see Charles' note): 'In those days shall the angels return and hurl themselves upon the East, upon the Parthians and the Medes, to stir up the kings and provoke in them a spirit of unrest, and rouse them from their thrones . . . And they will march up to and tread under foot the land of his elect ones, and the land of his elect ones will be before them a threshing-floor and a path.' Notice that here the prophetic diction of verses 7 and 8 passes over into description.

**the camp of the saints . . . and the beloved city** signify the same thing, viz. Jerusalem (cf. Pss. lxxviii. 68, lxxxvi. 2).

**fire came down out of heaven.** Cf. Ezek. xxxviii. 22, xxxix. 6, 'I will send a fire on Magog'; Gen. xix. 24.

**10. where are also the beast, &c.** See xix. 20, and note.

**day and night.** Cf. xiv. 11.

Bousset is of opinion that in this passage (verses 1-10) the writer has incorporated an earlier and Jewish tradition regarding the end. The prediction concerning Gog and Magog is a characteristic mark of such tradition. The same tradition probably fixed the duration of the Messianic Kingdom at a thousand years and its scene at Jerusalem. But the fixing of religious hope on an earthly kingdom of righteousness is characteristic rather of prophecy than of apocalyptic; and this chapter, in fact, shews

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon <sup>11</sup> it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the <sup>12</sup> 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 <sup>13</sup> were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead

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how the Christian church held both, as it must continue to do, if it is to hold the truth.

XX. 11-15. *The general Resurrection and last Judgement.*

**11. a great white throne:** cf. Isa. vi. 1; Dan. vii. 9. This is not necessarily the throne of chap. iv, but the throne of judgement, 'great' in contrast with the 'thrones' of xx. 4, and 'white' with the intensity of Divine purity.

**him that sat upon it:** the Judge is reverently indicated, not named; cf. iv. 2. He is God the Father as in Dan. vii. 10, and throughout this book; but it must be remembered also that the throne is now 'the throne of God and of the Lamb' (xxii. 1). Cf. 4 Ezra vii. 33, 'The Most High shall appear upon the seat of judgement.'

**the earth and the heaven fled away:** cf. xvi. 20. The earliest form of this thought is in Isa. li. 6 (cf. Matt. xxiv. 35). In 2 Pet. iii. 10-12 it is through 'fervent heat' that the elements are to 'be dissolved.'

**12. the dead:** i. e. the 'rest of the dead' who 'lived not' in the first resurrection, verse 5.

**books were opened.** So in Dan. vii. 10, 'The judgement was set, and the books were opened'; 4 Ezra vi. 20, 'The books shall be opened before the firmament.' Cf. also Mal. iii. 16; *Enoch*, xc. 22.

**another book . . . of life.** The 'books' are doubtless those in which the deeds of men are recorded, 'the book of life,' that which contains the names of the redeemed; see iii. 5 and note, xiii. 8, xvii. 8, and cf. Luke x. 20. Phil. iv. 3.

**according to their works.** Cf. Rom. ii. 6; 2 Cor. iv. 10, xi. 15.

**13. the sea:** There is neither any ground nor any parallel for taking this in any but a literal sense, e. g. 'the emblem of the unruly and troubled nations of the earth' (Milligan).

**death and Hades:** cf. i. 18, vi. 8, and note. It is important here to keep clear the conception of Hades (not 'hell') as the

- which were in them: and they were judged every man  
 14 according to their works. And death and Hades were  
 cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, *even*  
 15 the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in  
 the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.
21. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the

'abode into which death ushers men,' without any distinction being necessarily drawn between the righteous and the wicked. Here, as in vi. 8, there seems to be a personification, 'Hades' being put for the power which governs this abode. See Salmond's art. 'Hades' in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.

14. As above, 'Death and Hades are regarded as two demons, enemies of God,' and as such they are to be destroyed; cf. 1 Cor. xv. 26, 54.

**the second death.** See above verse 6, ii. 11, xxi. 8, and cf. Matt. xxv. 41, 'The eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels.'

15. Bousset compares *Enoch*, xc. 20, 24, 'I saw till a throne was erected in the pleasant land, and the Lord of the sheep sat Himself thereon, and that other took the sealed books and opened them before the Lord of the sheep. . . . And the judgement was first held over the stars, and they were judged and found guilty, and went to the place of condemnation, and they were cast into an abyss, full of fire and flaming.'

#### xxi—xxii. 5. THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM.

The judgement is over. The Lamb has triumphed over his enemies. It remains to shew his union in glory with the church he has redeemed. The detailed description of the glorified church and her union with the Lamb occupies xxi. 9—xxii. 5. But to that is prefixed, as so often in the course of the book, an anticipative and concise account of the same vision (xxi. 1—8).

xxi. 1—8. *The Holy City from afar.*

1. **a new heaven and a new earth.** See Isa. lxv. 17, 'Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth'; lxvi. 22; *Enoch*, xci. 16. 'Two words in the New Testament are translated "new," but there is a difference between them. The one contemplates the object spoken of under the aspect of something that has been recently brought into existence, the other under a fresh aspect what had previously existed, but been overthrown. The latter given to word is employed here, as it is also employed in the phrases "a new garment," that is, a garment not threadbare, like an old one; a "new tomb," that is, not one recently hewn out of the

first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great

rock, but one which had never been used as the last resting-place of the dead. The fact, therefore, that the heavens and the earth here spoken of are "new," does not imply that they are now first brought into being. They may be the old heavens and the old earth; but they have a new aspect, a new character, adapted to a new end' (Milligan).

**the sea is no more.** This, as a feature of the re-created world, is a witness to the estimate of the sea among the ancients. For them it was only turbulent, 'estranging, hostile'; it devoured men with its 'insatiable maw'; it could find no place therefore in the world made perfect.

**2. the holy city.** See xi. 2, and note.

**new Jerusalem.** Cf. iii. 12; for 'new' see note above. The closest parallel in N. T. is Paul's phrase in Gal. iv. 26, 'the Jerusalem that is above,' where the representation rests on the Rabbinic idea that there was a Jerusalem 'of the world to come' different from, but corresponding to, the Jerusalem 'that now is'—in modern language, an 'ideal' city. Cf. Heb. xii. 22. See Weber, *Jüdische Theologie*, pp. 374, 404. The idea is further developed in later Jewish apocalypses. Thus in the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (chap. iv), written after the fall of Jerusalem, it is announced that the ruined city is not the real Jerusalem; for that had been kept by God from the foundation of the world, and seen in a vision by Moses on Mount Sinai. Similarly, in 4 Ezra x. the heavenly Jerusalem is contrasted with the earthly (Bousset). The commentators further quote from the Rabbinic treatise *Sohar*: 'Deus innovabit mundum suum, et ædificabit Hierosolymam, ut ipsam descendere faciat in medium sui de cælo, ita ut nunquam destruat.' For John these earlier speculations supply the imagery in terms of which he describes the ideal city of God. But though described as a city, it is really the figure of a people, and the 'condition localized' in which they dwell. Thus it is quite unnecessary to raise the question 'whether the vision of the new Jerusalem belongs to the end, or whether it expresses what, under the Christian dispensation, is always ideally true.' It does both, in so far as what is now ideally true, a spiritual fact being realized, is one day to be perfectly realized and manifested 'at the end.'

**made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.** Cf. Isa. lxi. 10—lxii. 5; the idea belongs to the same circle of thought as xix. 7, 9, Matt. xxii. 2, xxv. 10, Luke xii. 36.

voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, 4 *and be* their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: 5 the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on

**3. a great voice out of the throne:** i. e. the throne in xx. 11. Cf. xix. 5, xvi. 1 ('out of the temple').

**the tabernacle of God is with men.** The word is the one used in LXX for the tabernacle in the wilderness; cf. Heb. viii. 2, ix. 11; John i. 14, R. V. marg.

**he shall dwell with them.** The verb is the same as in John i. 14. The dwelling of God among His chosen people, symbolized by the Tabernacle and the Schechinah, is to become a dwelling 'with men,' apart from any material distinction. This dematerializing of the religious hope is in full accordance with the teaching of Jesus (cf. chap. vii and commentary), and a marked advance on the prophecies in Ezek. xxxvii. 27, Zech. viii. 8, Jer. xxxi. 33.

**his peoples.** The plural, which usually signifies the nations hostile to God, in contrast to the 'people' of Israel (cf. Acts iv. 25; Rom. xv. 10, 11; Rev. x. 11), is a further indication of the breaking down of national barriers; cf. xi. 15.

**God himself shall be with them:** or, 'He shall be God with them' (Alford). The promise contained in the name 'Emmanuel' (Isa. vii. 14; cf. Matt. i. 23) is now to be perfectly fulfilled. Cf. also Jer. xxiv. 7; Ezek. xi. 20; Zech. viii. 8; Ezek. xlvi. 35, 'The name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there.'

**and be their God.** Cf. Gen. xvii. 7; Exod. xxix. 45; Lev. xxvi. 11; Ezek. xxxvii. 27; Heb. xi. 16.

**4. he shall wipe away every tear.** Cf. vii. 17, and note.

**death shall be no more.** Also from Isa. xxv. 8, but not referred to in Rev. vii. 17. Death is not here personified as in xx. 13.

**neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, &c.** Cf. Isa. xxxv. 10, lxv. 16-19; *Enoch*, x. 22, 'The earth will be cleansed from all corruption, and from all sin, and from all punishment and torment.'

**the first things.** Cf. verse 1: the 'first' things are the 'former' things, those which belong to and characterize the old aeon, or dispensation, the 'fashion of this world.'

**5. he that sitteth.** Cf. iv. 2, 9, vii. 10, xix. 4, &c. **I make**

the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true. And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am 6 the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit 7 these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my

**all things new.** The language is similar to Isa. xliii. 19; Jer. xxxi. 22, but the thought takes a larger sweep, and finds its closest parallel in 2 Cor. v. 17.

**And he saith, Write.** It is possible that the speaker in this verse is different from him who speaks in the following one, e. g. the angel or the impersonal voice which has already given similar directions to the Apostle, xiv. 13; xix. 9.

**faithful and true.** The same combination occurs in iii. 14, xix. 11, xxii. 6.

**6. he said unto me.** Here it can be only the Lord God who speaks; see below, and i. 8.

**They are come to pass.** Cf. xvi. 17; Luke xiv. 22 (Gk.). There are several various readings of the single word thus translated, one of which yields the rendering of the A. V., 'It is done'; another makes the word a first person singular, and the predicate of the following clause. The reading of the R. V., though it gives an unusual form, is the best attested, and yields an intelligible sense, whether, with Alford; we understand, 'These words are come to pass,' or better, 'They, all the new things, the new heaven and the new earth, are come into being'; cf. Gen. i. 31.

**I am the Alpha and the Omega.** So in i. 8; in i. 11, xxii. 13 it is Christ who describes himself in the same terms.

**unto him that is athirst.** Isa. lv. 1; John iv. 13, vii. 37; Matt. v. 6.

**the fountain of the water of life.** Cf. passages in John above; Rev. xxii. 17, vii. 17, note, and for the freeness of the gift, Isa. lv. 1 (lii. 3); Matt. x. 8; Rom. iii. 24.

**7. He that overcometh.** This, the culminating promise of the book, is cast in the same form as the promises made by the Son in the Letters to the churches.

**shall inherit** (cf. Matt. v. 5) **these things**: i. e. the glories of the new world now brought to birth.

**I will be his God, &c.** The promise is an echo of one which occurs frequently in the O. T.: Gen. xvii. 7, 8; 2 Sam. vii. 14; Jer. xxiv. 7, &c. The promise made first to the founder of the

8 son. But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part *shall be* in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

nation, then to its representatives, is now, through Christ, become the heritage of all who believe.

**8. the fearful:** not the timid, neither those who 'work out their own salvation with fear and trembling,' but the 'cowardly,' the 'craven.' The substantive is found in 2 Tim. i. 7, 'God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness.'

**unbelieving.** The word may equally well describe believers who are 'unfaithful' to their belief, and if, as seems probable, the words immediately adjacent refer to those who have once professed Christianity, this is probably the significance to be preferred.

**and abominable** (Hos. ix. 10, Gk.). Those polluted with abominations such as are referred to in xvii. 4, specially the worship of the Beast, but also in general the iniquities of the world. Cf. with the whole verse *Enoch* (Slavonic), x. 4, 'This place . . . is prepared for those who dishonour God, who work unnatural vice on earth, . . . sorceries, exorcisms, demonic predictions, . . . lies' (Hühn).

**sorcerers:** *lit.* 'dealers in potions or philtres' (cf. xxii. 15, xviii. 23; Exod. vii. 11; Mal. iii. 5), here 'dealers in magic' of any kind, such as Elymas 'the sorcerer' (Acts xiii. 8) and Simon 'Magus' (Acts viii. 9). Cf. also Acts xix. 19, Rev. xiii. 15. The great part held by magic and sorcery in the popular religion and life of Western Asia is illustrated both by these references and by the copious literature of magic which has come to light. See Deissmann's *Bible Studies*, pp. 273 ff., 323, 352 ff.; also articles in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, 'Exorcist,' 'Magic,' 'Sorcery.'

**idolaters.** The primary reference is probably to those who suffered themselves to be seduced or driven into the worship of the image of the Beast (xiii. 14, 15).

**all liars.** Best understood in the light of the parallel in xxii. 15, 'Every one that loveth and maketh a lie.'

**the lake that burneth, &c.** See xix. 20, notes.

**the second death.** Cf. ii. 11, xx. 6, 14, 15.

#### xxi. 9—xxii. 5. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE VISION OF THE CITY.

The Apostle now reverts to the vision of the Heavenly City. He has announced it in verses 1, 2, but been diverted from the full description, which now follows, by the voices which accompanied the vision.

And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal: having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and

xxi. 9-17. *The measuring of the city.*

**9. And there came . . . shew thee.** This is identical with the introduction to the vision of the Harlot in xvii. 1, a vision with which there is an obvious, and probably intentional, contrast in this one of the Bride.

**the bride.** See verse 2, note.

**10. in the Spirit.** So in xvii. 3, where, however, it is to the wilderness that the Apostle is conveyed.

**to a mountain great and high.** The imagery here and in what follows is closely parallel to that in Ezek. xl. 2 ff., where the O. T. prophet describes the measuring of the ideal city, 'In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me down upon a very high mountain, whereon was as it were the frame of a city on the south.' Cf. also Matt. iv. 8.

**the holy city, &c. :** repeated from verse 2.

**11. having the glory of God:** as in verse 23, 'The glory of God did lighten it.' Cf. the announcement regarding the earthly city in Isa. lx. 1, 'The glory of the Lord is risen upon thee'; also Ezek. xliii. 2, 4, 5, 'The glory of the Lord came into the house.'

**her light:** the word elsewhere means 'luminary' (Phil. ii. 15; Gen. i. 14); here it stands for the splendour which is the effect of the Divine glory shining as the sun in its strength.

**a jasper stone, clear as crystal:** probably a diamond, but see note on iv. 3, and article in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, 'Stones, Precious.'

**12. having twelve gates.** The same features are found in Ezekiel's description (xlvi. 31 ff.).

**at the gates: lit. 'on,' i. e. 'in charge of';** cf. Isa. lxii. 6, 'I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem.'

**names written thereon . . . Israel.** There is perhaps

names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve  
 13 tribes of the children of Israel: on the east were three  
 gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south  
 14 three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall  
 of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve  
 15 names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that  
 spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to  
 measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall  
 16 thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length  
 thereof is as great as the breadth: and he measured the  
 city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length

a contrast with the 'names of blasphemy' with which the scarlet-coloured beast was 'full' (xvii. 3). In Ezek. xlviii. 31, 'The gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel'; where the idea seems to be that to each tribe is assigned its several gate, and so it may be here.

**13. on the east were three gates, &c.** In Ezekiel the order is different, and again different in Num. ii and *Enoch*, xxxiii-xxxv, where we find a similar enumeration of 'the portals out of which the stars of heaven come forth.'

**14. twelve foundations.** The three portals on each of the four sides divide the walls into twelve parts, to each of which a different foundation is assigned. These are not buried out of sight, but are probably a continuous and visible basement to the wall.

**twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.** This gives a concrete expression to the idea of Eph. ii. 20, but the parallel is not so close as at first appears. It is only a far-fetched objection to the Johannine authorship which sees an improbability here in the author's assigning to his own name amongst others so honourable a position. The Twelve (whether including or excluding Paul) are here referred to in a corporate and official capacity, and any attempt to individualize them is quite out of place.

**15.** Cf. with these verses the vision of Ezek. xl. 3ff., in which also the city and temple are measured with minute detail. Here, as there, the measuring is with a view to the ideal city which is to be—not as in xi. 2.

**16. twelve thousand furlongs.** This is apparently the length of one side, and exceeds 1,300 English miles. When we realize further that the city is described as a perfect cube, the height of which is also 1,300 miles, it is plain that there is an intentional

and the breadth and the height thereof are equal. And he 17  
 measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four  
 cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, of an  
 angel. And the building of the wall thereof was jasper : and 18  
 the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. The founda- 19  
 tions of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner  
 of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper ; the  
 second, sapphire ; the third, chalcedony ; the fourth,  
 emerald ; the fifth, sardonyx ; the sixth, sardius ; the 20

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'absence of all verisimilitude' (Milligan). The dimensions of the city, like its shape and everything belonging to it, are beyond the compass of human experience.

Bousset points out the curious predictions on the same subject in the *Sibylline Oracles*, according to which the walls of the holy city were to reach as far as Joppa, to glitter as the stars, as the sun, and the moon, and the Messiah was to build within it a Temple and a tower reaching to the clouds.

It is possible to obtain a conceivable picture of the city by supposing it to be built round a mountain of vast height, but this hardly does justice to the emphatic statement that 'the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal.'

17. **He measured the wall thereof**, whether the height or the width it is impossible to say. In either case the dimensions (two hundred feet) are again conventional figures, 'twelve multiplied by twelve.'

according to **the measure**, &c. : meaning that the measure used by an angel is the same as that used by a man.

xxi. 18-27. *The appearance and character of the city.*

18. **jasper** (probably 'diamond') . . . **pure gold**. In these as in all the following respects also 'it is evident that the city is thought of as ideally perfect, and not according to the realities or possibilities of things' (Milligan).

19, 20. It has been pointed out that the stones here enumerated as 'adorning' or forming the foundations are, with few exceptions, the same as we find in the description of the high-priest's breastplate (Exod. xxviii. 17 ff., xxxix. 10 ff.), and in the description of Tyre (Ezek. xxviii. 13 ff.). Their modern equivalents cannot in all cases be ascertained with certainty; but probably the 'sapphire' is our *lapis lazuli*; the 'chalcedony,' our agate; the 'emerald,' our emerald; the 'sardonyx,' our onyx-stone; the 'sardius' (iv. 3), a cornelian; the 'chrysolite,' a 'golden

seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several gates was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten

yellow' stone, possibly amber or topaz; the 'beryl,' our beryl; the 'topaz,' our chrysolite; the 'chrysoprase,' a stone like the 'chrysolite,' but of paler golden yellow; the 'jacinth,' possibly our sapphire; and the 'amethyst,' our amethyst. But see article, 'Stones, Precious,' in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.

**21. pearls.** Contrast Isa. liv. 12, 'I will make thy pinnacles of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of pleasant stones.'

**the street.** Neither the single street, nor the central square, but 'all that the city has of street,' i. e. the streets.

**22. I saw no temple therein.** The new Jerusalem is an ideal city on an ideal earth. In the historical city the function of the temple had been to symbolize the presence of God in a society which was not wholly and inwardly one with Him. As a local symbol it had at least the appearance of localizing His presence. But in a perfected and redeemed society no such symbol and apparent limitation is required. There is no temple, because the city is all temple. God is no longer anywhere, because He is felt to be everywhere. 'The old Jerusalem was all temple. The mediæval church was all temple. But the ideal of the new Jerusalem was—no temple, but a God-inhabited society.' There is a curious echo of the thought in John iv. 21, 'The hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.'

**23.** The same thought is found in Isa. lx. 19, 'The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.' The thought is so closely parallel that the Apostle must have had the passage in his mind; and, if so, it is noteworthy that in his closing phrase 'the Lamb' occupies the place of 'thy God' in the prophecy. The thought is again parallel to John viii. 12, 'I am the Light of the world.'

it, and the lamp thereof *is* the Lamb. And the nations 24 shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it. And the gates thereof 25 shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there): and they shall bring the glory and the 26 honour of the nations into it: and there shall in no wise 27 enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. And he shewed me a river 22

**24. the nations shall walk, &c.** So in Isa. lx. 3, 'The nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.' It follows that there are 'nations' and 'kings' on the new earth outside the new city; the phrase, 'of them which are saved,' which has crept into the received text, is an effort to make plain the fact that on the new earth these also must be of the redeemed. This is not, however, what the O. T. parallels would suggest. Bousset holds that there is plainly 'an archaic feature of the description here, which originally belongs only to the picture of the renewed (earthly) Jerusalem.'

**25, 26. the gates thereof, &c.** Cf. Isa. lx. 11, 'Thy gates also shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the wealth of the nations.' Gates open continually signify perfect tranquillity and safety; here there is the further thought that even the natural reason for closing them is removed; both danger and darkness are done away.

**there shall be no night there.** Cf. Zech. xiv. 6, 7; Isa. lx. 1, 2.

**27. Cf. Isa. lii. 1** (of the renovated city), and Ezek. xlv. 9. It does not follow that the Apostle anticipates that these evil things will be found on 'the new earth'; his attention is fixed on the 'new city,' and he expresses its absolute immunity from everything unclean in such terms as would be natural of the historical city, and were indeed suggested by the parallels above (but see below).

**an abomination.** Cf. xvii. 4, xxi. 8, xxii. 15.

**the Lamb's book of life.** Cf. iii. 5, xiii. 8, xx. 12.

On the above interpretation the new Jerusalem, like the new heaven and the new earth, is still in the future. I have not been able to accept the other interpretation, of which Dr. Milligan's is a typical example. But it should be stated. 'There are

of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that

distinct indications in the apocalyptic vision which leave no interpretation possible except one—that the new Jerusalem has come, that it has been in the midst of us for more than eighteen hundred years, that it is now in the midst of us, and that it shall continue to be so wherever its king has those who love and serve him, walk in his light, and share his peace and joy.' 'In the new Jerusalem, therefore, we have essentially a picture, not of the future, but of the present.'

The indications on which this interpretation is based are far outweighed: (1) By the consideration of the place occupied by the vision, *after* the Judgement, and *after* the first and second resurrections, and *after* the Millennium; and (2) by direct statements which connect the vision with a new creation, and with a situation far removed indeed from any experience of Christ's people, even when viewed in the most ideal light. These 'indications,' or some of them at least, are of course difficulties in the way of any other interpretation, but in the light of the O.T. passages, with which the imagery of this chapter is so closely connected, they are easily accounted for as features of the earlier anticipations concerning the idealized city which have been taken over into this. At the same time, of course, the ideal city of the future is an ideal for the present, which should be, and in fact is, continuously realized; although, according to the teaching of this book, no process of development on earth can achieve the heavenly model: it is after the crisis of judgement that all things are made new.

xxii. 1-5. *The river and the tree of life.*

**1. a river of water of life.** The idea of a river in Paradise comes down from the description of Eden (Gen. ii. 10): with this is combined the symbolical use of 'waters,' 'living waters' for all blessings flowing to man from the presence of God: Jer. ii. 13, 'They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters'; Ezek. xlvii. 1-12, where the fullness of the Divine Presence in the temple and the Land is set forth under the figure of a stream of healing waters; in Ps. xlvi. 4 the river is emphatically presented as one of the features in the city of God. Cf. further Zech. xiv. 8; John iv. 10; Rev. vii. 7, xxi. 6.

**out of the throne.** In Ezekiel's vision the stream issues from the temple; now that the city is 'all temple,' the ultimate source of healing and fertilizing grace is traced yet further back to the central symbol of the presence of the king.

was the tree of life, bearing twelve *manner of* fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be <sup>3</sup> no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the

**2. the tree of life.** The word is in the singular, but the context shews that it is to be understood generically. One tree could not be at once 'in the midst,' and 'on this side and on that.' The river and the street run side by side through the city. In the space between them trees of life are placed in rows on this side and on that. In the old Paradise (Gen. ii. 9) there was but one such tree; in the new one there are many. Whenever a man finds himself within this city, he is within reach both of the river and of the tree of life. There is thus not only a repetition, but an expansion, of the idea in ii. 7 (q. v.).

**bearing twelve manner of fruits, &c.** Cf. Ezek. xlvii. 6-12, and especially 12, 'By the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side shall grow every tree for meat, whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall the fruit thereof fail: it shall bring forth new fruit every month . . . and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for healing.'

**for the healing of the nations:** see Ezek. as above. The virtues of the tree of life are similarly described in apocalyptic books, e. g. *Enoch*, xxiv. 4, xxv. 4, 5, 'This tree will then be given to the righteous and humble. By its fruit will life be given to the elect; it will be transplanted to the north, to the temple of the Lord.' See also *Book of Jubilees*, x. 10-13. The reference to the 'nations'—peoples outside the city—who stand in need of healing is part of the earlier conception of a terrestrial but restored Jerusalem, which has not been assimilated to the picture of the celestial city.

**3. there shall be no curse any more.** From Zech. xiv. 11, 'There shall be no more curse.' Probably we should understand, 'no longer any accursed thing,' no barrier of iniquity (Isa. lix. 2) between men and God. The second half of the verse therefore describes the consequences of the first, as is suggested by the R. V. substituting 'and' for 'but.' The thought is well illustrated from Joshua vii. 12, 'I will not be with you any more, except ye destroy the devoted thing from among you.'

**the throne of God and of the Lamb.** There have been frequent references to the 'throne of God'—Christ has spoken of *his* throne (iii. 2), and the Lamb has been presented in closest proximity to the throne of God (vii. 17); here all these ideas are combined and harmonized: the throne of God and the throne of the Lamb are identical. The combination is Johannine (John xiv. 23). Cf. *Enoch*, lxii. 14, 'The Lord of spirits will abide over

Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall do him  
 4 service; and they shall see his face; and his name *shall*  
 5 *be* on their foreheads. And there shall be night no  
 more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of  
 sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they  
 shall reign for ever and ever.

6 And he said unto me, These words are faithful and  
 them, and with that Son of man will they eat, and lie down, and  
 rise up for ever and ever' (Hühn).

**his servants shall do him service:** cf. vii. 15. The words are different in their connotation, but the distinction cannot be reproduced in English. 'His *douloi* ("bond-servants") shall render Him *latreia* ("the service of ministry").' The reward of submissive service here is the call to more honourable and more understanding ministry above (Matt. xxiv. 45-47). They who see His face serve Him with unclouded vision and undivided love.

**4. they shall see his face.** Theirs is that privilege which had been forbidden to men on earth (Exod. xxxiii. 20), anticipated as the crowning experience of bliss (Ps. xvii. 15), foretold as the portion of the pure (Matt. v. 8), and promised as the condition of perfect conformity to Christ (1 John iii. 2; cf. 1 Cor. xiii. 12).

**his name shall be on their foreheads.** See vii. 3, note, xiv. 1; and contrast the name of the beast 'upon the forehead' of such as worship him. In each of these phrases—'his servants,' 'his face,' 'his name'—it is God who is referred to; but as with the throne, so with these, they are 'of God and the Lamb.'

**5. And there shall be night no more:** as above, xxi. 25.

**they need no light of lamp, &c.:** as above, ii. 23.

**they shall reign for ever and ever.** Cf. xx. 4, 6, the promised reign of a thousand years, and contrast the limitations there with the indefinite enlargement of the promise here—'his servants,' 'for ever and ever.' The thought of the never-ending dominion of the 'saints of the Most High,' or 'the holy people itself most high,' comes down from Dan. vii. 18, 27. Cf. Rev. v. 10, xi. 15, xii. 10. The consummated dominion of Christ (1 Cor. xv. 24, 25) carries with it the dominion of his saints, his new creation, which was symbolized in the first creation (Gen. ii. 28; Heb. ii. 7, 8).

#### xxii. 6-21. THE EPILOGUE.

The visions are at an end (cf. Dan. vii. 27). What follows consists of a series of solemn confirmations, assurances, and instructions.

true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass. And behold, I 7 come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.

And I John am he that heard and saw these things. 8 And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these

xxii. 6-9. *Confirmation of the revelation by the angel.*

**6. he said unto me.** It is an angel who speaks (verse 9), probably the one referred to in i. 1, to whom had been specially committed the function of 'signifying' to John the things that must shortly come to pass.

**These words** (i. e. the contents of this book) **are faithful and true.** They partake of the character of him to whom and through whom (i. 1) they were given (iii. 14; cf. xix. 9).

**the Lord** (the Almighty), **the God of the spirits of the prophets.** So R. V. for 'of the holy prophets.' Cf. Num. xvi. 22, xxvii. 16, 'God of the spirits of all flesh.' In the *Book of Enoch*, 'Lord of the spirits' is the constantly-recurring title of the Most High (xxxvii. 2, xxxviii. 2, &c.). The special turn given to the thought here marks the writer's interest in 'the prophets,' and his sense of his own relation to them. Cf. 1 Cor. xiv. 32.

**sent his angel, &c.** So in i. 1 (q. v.).

**7. behold, I come quickly.** Though these words are the words of Christ (iii. 11), it does not follow that they are here spoken by him. 'The speech passes into the words of Christ, reported by the angel; so in verse 12 and in xi. 3' (Alford).

**Blessed is he that keepeth, &c.** Cf. the blessing in i. 3, with which this is closely parallel. The phrase 'of this book' is probably an explanatory addition by the writer to the words of the angel, or the words may have been pronounced after the book was actually written. Observe once more how emphatically the writer attaches himself and his work to the order and work of the prophets. The apostolic consciousness is throughout subordinate to that of the Christian prophet.

**8. And I John am he, &c.** With this solemn asseveration of his participation in the visions cf. Dan. xii. 5; also Rev. i. 9.

**I fell down, &c.:** as in xix. 10, where see notes. If this were not the angel of xix. 10, but the one through whom the whole series of visions had been mediated, it is not difficult to understand a renewed and yet more imperious impulse in the Apostle to do homage to such a power.

9 things. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets; and with them which keep the words of this book: worship God.

10 And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the  
11 prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand. He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that

9. The words of the angel are not properly described as a rebuke, though they convey an emphatic prohibition. They reveal at once the subordinate position even of this great power, and the exalted privilege both of **the prophets** and of **them which keep the words of this book**. They are fellow servants of the angels, 'in so far as they possess and preserve a heavenly revelation.'

xxii. 10-15. *Warnings and promises.*

10. **he saith unto me.** It would not be consistent with the Christology of the book to see in the speaker—who has refused to receive worship, and claimed only equal rank with the prophets—Christ himself. On the other hand, at verse 15, it is Jesus who speaks. Whether it is the angel or the Saviour who speaks here, it is not easy to decide. If it is the angel, he speaks yet more clearly in the name of Christ. But probably it is from this point that the voice of Christ is heard.

**Seal not, &c.** This is in contrast to the instruction given to the Seer (x. 4) and to Daniel (xii. 4). In the latter case, the motive is probably the long time that has yet to elapse before the end. It is to be reserved for another generation than that of Daniel. Cf. also Isa. viii. 16, 17, where, because the prophet perceives that the Lord hideth His face, and is constrained to an indefinite waiting, he gives the command: 'Bind thou up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.' Here, on the other hand, 'the time is at hand'; the people whom John addresses are those on whom 'the end of the world has come'; the revelation is for immediate use; therefore it requires not to be sealed.

11. **He that is unrighteous, &c.:** more literally, 'He that doeth unrighteousness, let him do unrighteousness still,' or, 'Let the wrongdoer continue to do wrong.' The present era, which is 'a day of salvation,' is so nearly at an end that there is hardly room for change. Cf. Ezek. iii. 27, xx. 39; Dan. xii. 10, and Matt. xxvi. 45, 'Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand.'

is righteous, let him do righteousness still : and he that is holy, let him be made holy still. Behold, I come <sup>12</sup> quickly ; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is. I am the Alpha and the <sup>13</sup> Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may <sup>14</sup> have the right *to come* to the tree of life, and may enter

**let him be made holy still :** *lit.* 'let him go on being made holy.' Some, as Alford and Holtzmann, give the verb a reflexive force—'let him sanctify himself still.'

The principle which underlies the whole verse applies only to the moment before the Judgement breaks, the point when the Bridegroom comes, and the door is shut, when choice is sealed and opportunity ends. The thought is worked out with great power in Browning's *Easter Day*, § xvi. ff.

**12. my reward is with me :** i. e. the reward I have to give. The phrase is from Isa. xl. 10 (cf. lxii. 11, LXX, 'thy Saviour hath come, having his own reward'), where it is significant that it is 'the Lord God' that is to come : 'his reward is with him, and his recompence before him.' The best illustration of the phrase is found in our Lord's parables of the Judgement, e. g. the Ten Virgins, the Talents and the Pounds.

**to render to each man, &c.** Job xxxiv. 11, 'For the work of a man shall he render unto him, And cause every man to find according to his ways'; Prov. xxiv. 12; Matt. xvi. 27 (the Son of man); Rom. ii. 6 (God).

**13. I am the Alpha and the Omega.** Here, as in i. 11, it is Christ who claims this title; in i. 8 and xxi. 6 it is the Father. Alford and others hold, however, that in all four cases it belongs to the Father, 'whether we assume the words to be spoken by Christ in God's name, or by the Eternal Father Himself.' See on i. 8.

**14. they that wash their robes.** This rendering of the R. V. rests upon a reading which differs only in a few letters from that represented by the A. V., and is supported by preponderating MS. authority. It is an abbreviation of the phrase in vii. 14 (q. v.), and must be interpreted in connexion with that passage. The cleansing is 'through faith, by his blood' whom God set forth to be a propitiation.

**that they may have the right to come to the tree of life :** or, more literally, 'the power over the tree of life,' i. e. liberty to use it. For the tree of life see verse 2, and ii. 7.

**and may enter in by the gates.** This right of entry of

- 15 in by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie.
- 16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches: I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

course precedes logically the right over the tree of life which stands within the city.

But 'this is the blessed paradox of faith. It is difficult to say which privilege enjoyed by the believer comes first, and which second. Rather may all that he enjoys be looked on as given at once, for the great gift to him is Christ himself, and in him everything is included. He is the gate of the city, and as such the way to the tree of life; he is the tree of life, and they who partake of him have a right to enter the city and dwell there' (Milligan).

**15. Without are the dogs, &c.** The privilege of entrance is emphasized by this list of those who are excluded. See xxi. 8, and notes. By 'dogs' are meant impure, lascivious persons; cf. Matt. vii. 6; Phil. iii. 2. Bousset says that it was 'the old description of the heathen or Gentiles.'

**the sorcerers.** Cf. ix. 21, xviii. 23. Here the word is probably used literally of the whole class of necromancers and dealers in magic, who flourished so greatly at this period. Cf. the association of 'sorcery' with 'idolatry' in Gal. v. 20; and see also Deissmann's *Bible Studies*, p. 271 ff., and Whitehouse in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, art. 'Magic.'

**every one that loveth and maketh a lie.** Here also, as in xxi. 8, the love and practice of falsehood stands at the end of the list.

xxii. 16-20. *The solemn witness of Christ and his prophet to the visions.*

**16. I Jesus have sent mine angel.** The figure, which has been behind the angel from the beginning of the visions (i. 13-17), in whose name the angel has spoken, now steps forth, as it were, to authenticate the angel's testimony.

**unto you.** The plural probably indicates the Christian prophets with whom John shared the Divine illumination.

**the root and the offspring of David.** Cf. v. 5; Isa. xi. 1, 10 ('a shoot out of the stock of Jesse'); Matt. i. 1, xxii. 42.

**the bright, the morning star.** There is a reference to the morning star in ii. 28, but the sense must be different here. The idea is probably to be traced from Num. xxiv. 17, through Matt. ii. 2

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he 17 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.

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the 18 prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the 19 words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

He which testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come 20 quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus.

and Luke i. 78. Judaism found in Balaam's prophecy a reference to the Messiah, and probably the false Messiah of A. D. 132 owed his name, Bar Cochba ('son of a star'), to this interpretation. The figure finds its realization in Christ who leads in the eternal day.

**17. the Spirit and the bride.** The bride is the church—here the church on earth, waiting for the coming of the Lord. The Spirit, too, says, 'Come,' by teaching her thus to pray (Rom. viii. 16). For the figure of the bride cf. xxi. 2; Gal. iv. 26; Eph. v. 25 ff.

**he that heareth:** *scil.* the voice of the Spirit and the bride take up the cry. For a poetical interpretation of the whole figure see Tennyson's *St. Agnes' Eve*.

**he that is athirst:** cf. Isa. lv. 1; John vii. 37, xxi. 6. There is a reciprocal invitation—from him that heareth, to Christ, that he will 'come'; and from Christ, or the prophet who speaks in his name, to the thirsty one, that he will come—to Christ.

**he that will, . . . freely:** so Isa. lv. 1, 'Without money and without price.' The closing sentence of the verse adds nothing to the preceding one; it only makes the same thought more definite.

**18, 19.** A similar warning is found in Deut. iv. 2, xii. 32. It refers of course to the book's essential contents or teaching, not merely to single words which might be added or omitted by a copyist. And it refers to this book only, not to all or any other of the books of the N. T.

**19. from the tree of life:** so the R. V., following all the best authorities. The penalty is therefore the loss of those very privileges which are promised in verse 14 to them that 'wash their robes,' namely, access to the city, and power to partake of the tree.

**20.** In this final assurance of the Lord, **I come quickly**, the

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints,  
Amen.

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Book of Revelation finds its key-note again and so 'sinks to rest,' with the acquiescent reply of faith, **Amen: come, Lord Jesus.** It opened with the promise to reveal the things which must quickly come to pass, and it goes out on the assurance that he, for whose coming these things are the prelude, is nigh at hand, even at the door.

**21.** The benediction follows as in the Epistles. Possibly it is another indication (cf. i. 3) that the book was intended to be read aloud in the religious assemblies of Christians.

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