

*THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE APOCALYPSE.
HER COMPLETENESS.*

IN a paper recently published in the *EXPOSITOR* we endeavoured to call attention to the fact, that the Apocalypse stands to the fortunes of the Church in this world in a relation remarkably similar to that in which the Fourth Gospel stands to the earthly history of Christ. What Jesus is to the Evangelist the Church is to the Seer, and the history of the former is to a large extent, and even in minute particulars, re-enacted in the history of the latter. To bring this fully and distinctly out is the fundamental aim and the animating principle of the last book of the Sacred Canon; and the fact is in striking harmony with that teaching of St. John, which leads him to dwell so often upon the unity of the Redeemer and his people. Those who are in Christ must expect to share his fate. All his experiences, whether in joy or sorrow, must be theirs. He has given them his word; the works that He did shall they do also; as the Father sent Him into the world even so sent He them into the world (John xvii. 14; xiv. 12; xvii. 18). We have thus gained the main point of view from which the history of the Church of Christ, as set before us in the Book of Revelation, is to be regarded, and we shall have occasion to return to it in the interpretation of some of the more weighty and difficult passages of the book. Our readers will, further, kindly bear in mind that, in compliance with the wish of the editor of the *EXPOSITOR*, and as corresponding with the aim of the periodical founded by him, our object is not to treat in a systematic manner of the Church of Christ as she appears in the Apocalypse. It is rather to discuss exegetically some of the more important passages in which certain aspects of the Church, or certain truths connected

with her, are brought under our notice. We have to deal, in short, only with studies on detached topics connected with the Church, and we shall make no attempt to combine them into one picture.

The first and most striking characteristic of the Church in the Apocalypse is her *completeness* from the very beginning of her history. In this respect she stands in striking contrast with those pictures of her progress in the world which are presented to us in the Acts of the Apostles and in the New Testament Epistles. In the latter, the Church is continually advancing, and achieving fresh triumphs for her Lord "in every place." Cast like the smallest of seeds into the earth, we see her sending up first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Carried to all lands, she finds, in them all, hearts open to receive the message which she is commissioned to proclaim; and before we leave the New Testament we behold her overshadowing the mightiest kingdoms of the day, enrolling multitudes of the poor among her numbers, occasionally winning even the rich and the learned, penetrating the army and the court. This victorious progress of the Church could not fail to afford to the early Christians one of the surest indications of the Divine origin of their faith. They saw in it the fulfilment of prophecy, and the beginning of the time when the mountain of the Lord's house should be established upon the hills, when all kings should fall down before Him in whom they trusted, and when all nations should serve Him.

Now the remarkable fact with which we have at present to deal is, that we find nothing of this progress in the Apocalypse. That book was intended to be the consolation of the Church amidst all her trials; to convince her that, however numerous and powerful might be her adversaries, God was on her side; and to shew her how weak was even Satanic might before Him who had gone forth "conquering

and to conquer." Yet, as we shall see, there does not appear to be in it one word either of missionary exertion or missionary success. From the first the Church is ideally complete. No mention is made of an enlargement of the number of her adherents, either out of the Jewish fold or out of the wider range of heathenism. From anything that is said we might infer that she starts fully developed at the first, and that to the last she does not increase. As, too, she gains none, so she loses none. Of all who belonged to her Jesus might say, as He said of his first disciples in his high-priestly prayer, "While I was with them I kept them in thy name which thou hast given me, and I guarded them, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition" (John xvii. 12).

No doubt another view has been taken, perhaps most frequently taken, by distinguished commentators. We have now, therefore, to examine several of the passages most relied on to establish their conclusion. Do they, or do they not, refer to the *conversion* of those mentioned in them?

Chapter iii. 8, 9. "I know thy works (behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power. . . . Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them which 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." The words are addressed to the faithful Church at Philadelphia, and may seem to contain a promise of missionary success. In this light they are regarded by Oecumenius, by Isaac Williams who quotes him, and by many others. The "door" is supposed to be similar to that spoken of by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians xvi. 8, 9, and 2 Corinthians ii. 12, when he says, "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost; for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries;" "Now when I came

to Troas for the gospel of Christ, and a door was opened unto me in the Lord." It thus denotes opportunities for preaching the gospel, and the almost necessary consequence will be that, these opportunities being made use of, success must follow. The meaning of the promise to Philadelphia is thus, that by her efforts many Jews shall be brought to the knowledge of the truth. Yet, instead of deducing the meaning of the word "door" in a writing of St. John from its use in the writings of St. Paul, and thus determining by that meaning the interpretation of what follows, it would surely be well first to fix the interpretation of the last clauses of Verse 9 considered in themselves, for they are simpler and less ambiguous than the word "door." When we do so the idea of converting either Jews or Gentiles will not easily suggest itself. It has indeed been urged by one eminent commentator on the Apocalypse (*Kliefoth*), that the word "worship" has Christ, and not the Philadelphian church, for its object. No impartial reader will be able to adopt that conclusion. "Worship" is evidently connected with the words "before thy feet" immediately following it, and it constitutes a part of that recompense which was to be given to the church in Philadelphia, for the manner in which it had braved the persecution of the Jews. These Jews had denounced the Christians there as no part of the people of God, had maintained that they and they alone could lay claim to the high title, and had even urged that, as hated by God, the new pretenders to his favour should be persecuted. To meet such a condition of things is the object of the Saviour's promise. He is not to shew that these Jews will eventually recognize and worship Him whom they now oppressed in the persons of his saints, but that they will at last be confounded by the spectacle of their own sin and folly, in having so entirely mistaken the character and the privileges of his disciples. A day was coming when the exalted Lord would vindicate

his little flock in the sight of an assembled universe, when He would make "the first last and the last first."

That this is the true meaning of the passage may be proved by many considerations upon which we cannot enlarge. It is in harmony with the whole context. It conveys a correctly expressed thought, which the introduction of the idea of conversion does not, for it is altogether out of harmony with the general strain of the New Testament to represent the converted as rendering homage to those who have brought them to the truth. It corresponds to that conception of the Church as clothed with *royal* dignity which is shewn, by the use of the word "crown" in Verse 11, to lie before the Seer's eye. And it is in keeping with the only legitimate sense of that prophecy of Isaiah upon which it seems probable that the representation rests: "The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. lx. 14). This text, then, does not speak of conversion.

We turn to another passage, Chapter xi. 13. "And in 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." The last expression here used is that peculiarly fixed on as conveying the distinct intimation that "the rest" of the inhabitants of "the great city" (Verse 8) were converted. Thus, for example, Godet speaks, "The remnant of the people, and in particular they who have been specially reserved for these supreme moments, give glory to God, and are converted to Him." (*Biblical Studies on the New Testament*, p. 369). It is certainly not to be denied that the words "give glory to God" may be employed in this sense. They are so employed in Chapters

iv. 9, and xvi. 9. In the latter of these two passages, it is even said expressly of those who were tormented by the contents of the fourth Bowl, that "they blasphemed the name of the God which hath the power over these plagues; and they repented not to give Him glory." But the whole question resolves into this, whether there is not in the Apocalypse, and in the New Testament generally, a giving glory to God by unbelief as well as faith, a submission to Him against as well as with the will, a constrained as well as a cheerful acknowledgment of those attributes of his which ought to lead to love and obedience, but the thought of which, when resisted, leads rather to hatred and disobedience. Thus it is that in James ii. 19, "The demons also believe and shudder," and that this spirit is exemplified in the case of the two men possessed with demons in the country of the Gadarenes, who cried out to Jesus, saying, "What have we to do with thee, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" The Divine character of our Lord and the beneficent nature of his mission were distinctly seen and acknowledged by those who thus set themselves against Him and were compelled to allow the justness of their doom. In that sense, and without the slightest trace of repentance or submission, they undoubtedly gave Him glory. A still more important illustration, because occurring in the writings of St. John, is furnished by the use of the word "marvel" in the fourth Gospel. When our Lord in John iii. 7, says to Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again," He refers not to the astonishment of admiration but rather to that of incredulous and angry surprise. When He says in Chapter v. verse 20, "And he will shew him greater works than these that ye may marvel," the marvelling spoken of is certainly not that of faith, but of astonishment and awe and alarm. The persons spoken to are "the Jews," and the word "ye" is emphatic. These stubborn enemies

of Christ, these determined rejecters of his gospel, are not thought of as likely to be converted by his "works." The effect of beholding them will, on the contrary, be only to harden them in sin. They have closed their eyes upon the light; they have deliberately chosen the darkness; how "can" they believe (Verse 44); how "will" they believe (Verse 47); Moses himself in whom they have placed their trust accuses them to the Father (Verse 45). Once more, referring at John vii. 21 to the same cure of the impotent man at Bethesda, which had preceded the long discourse in Chapter v., our Lord says, "I did one work, and ye all marvel," *i.e.* have had awakened in you those feelings of indignation and repulsion from Me of which ye now give evidence.

These passages prove conclusively that the idea of a glory to God given by an unbelieving and an unrepentant soul is familiar to St. John; and, bearing them now in mind, we need have little hesitation in saying that in the passage of the Apocalypse under consideration, neither faith nor repentance is implied. The context, also, renders this conclusion probable. The verse as a whole, whatever be the meaning of its special parts, deals with judgment—with an earthquake, with the falling of a part of the great city, with the killing of seven thousand persons. It is incongruous to suppose that, in a continuation of what is obviously one description, we should find mentioned a great act of grace. The particular expression used in the first part of the last clause of the verse makes the same conclusion not less probable. The word of the original for "affrighted" occurs, indeed, only here in the writings of St. John, but the substantive with which it is connected meets us in Chapters xi. 11; xviii. 10 and xviii. 15, and in each of these it clearly denotes not a gracious, but a guilty and a slavish, fear. There is, therefore, no thought of the conversion of those of whom the Seer is speaking.

To the change implied in that word, being "affrighted" is not a suitable preliminary, and the whole tone of the passage suggests that when they who are thus affrighted give glory to the "God of heaven," they do so from no recognition of his heavenly character as compared with the wickedness of earth, but from the conviction which they have received of the irresistibility of his power and the terribleness of his judgments. They are terrified, awed, subdued, but they are not converted.

We proceed to a third passage, Chapter xv. 4. "Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship thee, for thy righteous acts have been made manifest." The words are part of the song of praise sung immediately before the introduction of the angels with the seven last plagues, by those who stood upon the glassy sea, and who are described as "having come victorious from the beast and from his image, and from the number of his name" (Verse 2); and they embody in an anticipatory picture what the results of the infliction of these plagues are to be. It is not difficult to understand that they should be regarded by many commentators as containing a prediction of the conversion of the heathen; and it may be at once allowed that there is no passage of the Apocalypse which seems to speak so strongly of that great result. Yet it is extremely doubtful whether such an interpretation can be fairly put upon them.

(1) Our readers may call to mind what has been already said in speaking on Chapter iii. 8, 9, of the meaning of the word "worship." There is a worship of awe, of terror, and of trembling, as well as a worship of faith and love; and the simple use of that word, therefore, is not enough to prove that it is now used in its higher and better sense.

(2) In the second place, we are here manifestly taught

what are to be the *judgments* of God upon his enemies. The song immediately precedes the entrance upon the scene of the "seven angels having seven plagues, which are the last; for in them is finished the wrath of God" (Verse 1); and it is intended to describe the effect which these plagues, when inflicted, shall produce. We do not naturally look in such circumstances for mercy but for judgment, and for the vindication of the Almighty's own cause by the overthrow of his adversaries.

(3) In the third place, the appellation given to the Almighty in Verse 3 corresponds with this. He is not addressed in the language of the Authorized Version as "King of saints," but either as "King of the ages," or as "King of the nations." It does not matter for our present purpose which of these last two readings is adopted, although "King of the nations," given only in the margin of the Revised Version, appears to be the more probable. In either case we are led to a different conception of the Almighty from that which is suggested by the words, "King of saints;" the one bringing Him before us as the King eternal and unchangeable, who will no more fail in the execution of his threatenings than of his promises; the other reminding us that all "the nations" are in his hands as clay in the hands of the potter; that He shall rule them with a sceptre of iron; that as the vessels of the potter are they broken to shivers (Chapter ii. 27).

(4) In the fourth place, the ground assigned for the worship of the nations deserves notice. It is contained in the last clause of the verse, "for thy righteous acts have been made manifest." The righteous acts referred to are those which are peculiarly summarised in the effects that flow from the pouring out of the seventh and last Bowl; "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations (mark these words) 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" (Chapter xvi. 19). We shall not occupy time with the effort to show that "the great city" and the "Babylon" of this verse are identical,—one city, guilty Jerusalem, being thought of under both terms, though with a slightly different relation in each; but shall content ourselves with quoting the following note of Dean Alford upon the point:—

"And Babylon the great," he says, "mentioned specially, although really the same with ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, because of her specious adulterous character to be hereafter described."

Even, however, if this be not admitted, our argument will not be greatly affected. Babylon is associated in the closest manner with these final judgments of God, with the final "righteous acts" of the words now before us. Let us turn then to Chapter xix. 1, 2, where the Seer hears "as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah," and where he then states the cause why they thus praised God. It was because He had judged the great harlot which had corrupted the earth with her fornication, and had avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. All this, too, is prefaced by the statement, "True and *righteous* are thy judgments." In other words, these "righteous judgments" are equivalent to the "righteous acts" of the passage we are now considering. These "acts," therefore, do not take effect in the conversion, but in the overthrow, of the enemies of God.

The passages now considered might in themselves be held to be sufficient to bring out what we have in view. But there are two others of so peculiar a character that they must not be omitted. The first of these is to be found in Chapter x., where we are told of the "Little

Book" which was put into the hands of the Seer that he might eat it, and thereafter "prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings." The second meets us in Chapter xiv. 6, where St. John relates that he "saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having an eternal gospel to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people."

The first of these passages is supposed to indicate a great missionary era when the gospel shall be widely, if not universally, both proclaimed and embraced. To quote again from Isaac Williams, the most eloquent representative of this opinion, "This beautiful vision is the manifestation of the gospel to the world; and the book given to St. John his inauguration into the deeper knowledge of the kingdom. Thus the subjects are advancing into ever increasing orbits; the first seal, the single horseman in Judea; the first trumpet, the Church going forth from the ruins of Jerusalem; and now the glorious vision of its expansion throughout the world;" and again, "The standing on the earth and the sea occurs thrice, as if to characterize the vision as representing the universal Church both of the Jews and of the Gentiles; '*His right foot*' on the nations, as of acceptance; '*His left*' on Israel, as of rejection; or rather the '*right foot*' of advancement, the '*left*' of previous possession; or the gospel extending from the law." The question depends upon the light in which we are to regard the contents of the "Little Book," and on the interpretation to be given to the word "prophesy" in the last verse of the Chapter. As to the first of these two points, we must urge that it is an entire mistake to suppose that the "Little Book" contains what we know as the gospel, the proclamation of which is to be followed by the conversion of those who hear it. The gospel is a message of mercy to mankind. Everything in

the chapter shows that the "Little Book" is filled with a message of judgment. It is in the hands of an angel who, if not exactly the Lord Himself, is the representative of the Lord in *that character in which He comes to judgment*. Thus the angel is "arrayed with a cloud" (Verse 1); and, in five of the seven times in which we read in the Apocalypse of "a cloud," "the cloud," or "clouds," there can be no doubt that the cloud is the investiture of the Son of man when He appears as judge (Chapters i. 7; xiv. 14 twice; xiv. 15; xiv. 16). In the sixth (Chapter xi. 12), the definite article before "cloud" points to a cloud the nature of which was distinctly understood, and which can be no other than that associated, both in the Book of Revelation and in other parts of the New Testament, with the manifestation of the Judge of all at the last day (compare Matt. xxiv. 30, xxvi. 64; Mark xiii. 26, xiv. 62; Luke xxi. 27; 1 Thess. iv. 17). The cloud here must have a similar meaning. Again, we are told that the angel's "face was as the sun," and "his feet as pillars of fire" (Verse 1); the first of these expressions taking us back to Chapter i. 16, and bringing the sun before us in the light in which it is presented there, as the source of burning, scorching, heat; the second taking us to Chapter i. 15, where the fire is clearly that of judgment. Again, when the angel made himself heard, he "cried with a great voice, as a lion roareth" (Verse 3), thus indicating that something terrible was at hand. And, once more, "when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices" (Verse 3),—"thunders" the constant symbol of judgment, and "seven" in number, not because St. John at the moment heard seven, but because seven thunders represented judgment in all its completeness and intensity. No doubt a "rainbow" was upon the angel's head (Verse 1), but it is almost unnecessary to say that without this trait the description of the Judge would not be complete. It is the Lord of mercy

and of love who judges. Present Him only in his holiness and justice, and no voice of self-condemnation would be awakened in the sinner's breast. He would only complain of the harshness that he experiences, and of the tyranny that dooms him to his fate. It is the sight of love scorned, rejected, crucified,—of love that would fain have embraced the greatest sinner within its arms,—which awakes the conscience and rouses the agony of remorse.

These considerations are sufficient to prove that the "Little Book," given to the Seer by such a Being and with such accompaniments, cannot be a message of glad-tidings to men. What it contained we are not called upon at present to enquire. Enough, that it is a roll of judgment and terror, a message of wrath to the hardened, and not of grace to the labouring and heavy laden.

Then again as to the words, "Thou must prophesy" in Verse 11, the verb "to prophesy" occurs only once again in the Apocalypse, in Chapter xi. 3. It is there used of the two Witnesses who prophesy under circumstances, and with terrors at their command, which lead us directly to the thought of a proclamation not of mercy, but of woe, to those by whom they were so cruelly abused and persecuted. The same thought is obviously before us now; and, connecting with this the contents of the "Little Book," it is hardly possible to doubt that we have here a prophesying in the line of warning to the impenitent rather than of consolation to the troubled. It would seem clear, therefore, that in Chapter x. we have no great missionary era, no great extension of the Church by the preaching of peace on earth among men to whom God would reveal his good pleasure (Luke ii. 14).

What has been said may prepare us for the consideration of the still more difficult text in Chapter xiv. 6, where we read of "an eternal gospel" proclaimed "unto them that dwell on the earth." It can hardly surprise us that

by these words should be so often, perhaps even so generally, understood the gospel message of salvation, as again Isaac Williams says, "the *everlasting gospel* in brief simplicity, the carrying out in exceeding power of description of our Lord's discourse, 'This Gospel shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come.'" This idea has become so familiar to us through the rendering of the Authorized Version, "the everlasting gospel," and it is besides so natural in itself, that it is hard to think of anything else as the witness. Yet, in that case, why do we not find the article before the word "eternal"? The Greek speaks not of "the" eternal Gospel, but of "an" eternal gospel; and it is an altogether unwarrantable liberty with the text to supply what St. John, no doubt designedly, omitted. This circumstance alone is sufficient to shew that we have not the well known gospel of the love of God before us, but something else which may also be characterized as a gospel. The inference is confirmed by the mode in which the persons to whom this gospel is proclaimed are spoken of. They are such as "dwell on the earth"; words not used in the Apocalypse in a neutral sense applicable to the righteous as well as the wicked, but applied to those who have rejected heaven, who have chosen "the earthly" method of "the heavenly" things, and who rest themselves in fancied security upon what this present world bestows. It is confirmed also by the fact that in the very next following words we have set before us what this "gospel," this proclamation, is to be, "Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters" (Ver. 7). The "eternal gospel" here spoken of is a message of judgment like that which we have found in the "Little Book"—not perhaps exactly the same message, or having reference to the same persons,

but marked by the same distinctive quality, that it is words of wrath and not of love. Nor is it difficult to see why the persecuted saints of God should consider a message of this kind to be a gospel or good news. Were the souls under the altar of the fifth seal able to cry out, "How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Chapter vi. 10). Were the "great multitude in heaven," after the fall of Babylon, able to take up the very words of that prayer and to turn it into a song of praise, "saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God, for he hath *judged* the great harlot. . . . and he hath *avenged* the blood of his servants at her hand" (Chapter xix. 1, 2)? And why may not the thought of the Almighty's judgments upon sin be a source of satisfaction to his people? It is in no thought of vengeance that they rejoice, from no want of compassion for sufferers, but only because He in whom they trusted has vindicated his own cause, has illustrated that holiness and justice of his character with which the welfare of the universe is inextricably bound up, has fulfilled his promises, and has brought about his reign of perfect righteousness? Besides which, they do not anticipate the future. For aught they know there may be resources of God's grace which shall open up new methods of escape for all who do not deliberately harden themselves against his dealings. They are content to pause where the Divine word pauses. They see righteousness brought out of all its troubles in an evil world; they see evil robbed of its power any more to hurt righteousness; such a thought is well entitled to the name of good news, of an eternal gospel, proceeding from One who, to the complaint that "from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," replies that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. iii. 4, 8).

We shall not examine any other passages of the Apocalypse bearing upon the point under discussion. It may be at once allowed that the first impression produced upon us by those that we have considered, and others like them, is that we do meet in this book notices of the extension of the Church. A closer examination will, however, shew in every instance that nothing of the kind is spoken of, and that from first to last the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is treated of as ideally complete.

The fact is remarkable, but it has a distinct analogy in the fourth Gospel and in the Epistles of St. John. In tracing the conflict of Jesus in the former, we do not see so much sinners to be converted as enemies to be overcome. Men appear to be divided into two great classes, and the purpose of our Lord seems to be to draw out, and make manifest, tendencies already existing in each. He is the Light at which the susceptible increase into a flame the little spark of light already glimmering in their hearts, while in its presence and by its power the unsusceptible have their little spark of light extinguished, so that they sink into utter darkness. He wins the one, but the others are hardened and repelled. Not that the salvation to be found in Jesus is not designed to be universal; and not that men are regarded as so essentially identified with the two classes into which they are divided that they may plead an original destination of the Almighty as a plea for rejecting the salvation offered them. It is conclusive against the first of these ideas that the universalism of the gospel offer is brought out in the fourth gospel with more than ordinary force, and against the second that there is no other book of the New Testament in which the power of the "will" of man is placed in so strong a light, or in which so much emphasis is laid upon man's moral responsibility. Still the fact remains that there are two classes, and these existing not simply *after* but *before* the

work of Christ. "He that is *of God* heareth God's words; for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God;" "Ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep" (John viii. 47, x. 26). It is the same in the first Epistle of the same Apostle; "they are *of the world*: therefore speak they as of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he who is not *of God* heareth us not" (Chapter iv. 5, 6). And, again, when he refers to false brethren who had fallen away from the Church, he declares that they never belonged to it. They were the world in the Church. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest how that they all are not of us" (1 John ii. 19). The general teaching, indeed, of all the writings of St. John upon the point before us may be summed up in the following words of the Gospel: "He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God;" "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God *abideth* on him" (John iii. 18, 36). In the present condition of men their future is always viewed without attention being fixed on the fact that the righteous may fall away, or that the wicked may be converted and saved.

Such then is one leading aspect of the Church that meets us in the Apocalypse. We do not of course for a moment assert that the writer of that book did not contemplate her extension in the world, or that he leaves no room for that missionary progress, both among Jews and Gentiles, of which the other New Testament books contain so many indications and so many promises. But he does not bring this into view. He contemplates the true Church as the bride of Christ, from the first ideally complete. He sees

that the destiny of individuals may be left with One who willeth not the death of the sinner, and out of whose hand no enemy shall be able to pluck the feeblest of the flock. His thoughts rest on the Body of Christ as, throughout all her history, like her Lord, the same. She may lose apparent members; she may add to her numbers: it matters not: she is the one Church of her exalted Lord, following in his footsteps, "going" like Him to the Father, and perfect, unchangeable, divine.

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*THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE SERPENT WITH
SATAN IN THE BOOK OF WISDOM.*

IN Wisdom ii. 23, 24, we read: "God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own nature (*ἰδιότητος* not *ἀϊδιότητος*). Nevertheless through envy of the devil came death into the world: and they who are of his portion tempt it;" and it is generally considered that we have here a very remarkable development of Old Testament doctrine. The identification of the serpent who tempted Eve with the Devil and Satan is found nowhere in the canonical portion of the earlier Scriptures. Though there are certain well-known allusions to Satan in some few of the books of the Old Testament, yet there is nothing to connect the temptation and fall of man with his seductive address under the form of the serpent. It remained for the Christian writings to speak of "the great dragon, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. xii. 9, xx. 2); and so isolated is the doctrine in Wisdom, that many commentators have not hesitated to brand Verse 24 as an interpolation by a