



THE  
APOCALYPSE EXPLAINED,  
IN TWO SERIES OF DISCOURSES

ON

THE ENTIRE BOOK

OF THE

REVELATION OF ST. JOHN,

BY THE

REV. BENJAMIN SLIGHT, A. M.

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## P R E F A C E .

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It is, perhaps, but just, when a new work is presented to the public, that the enquirey should be made what necessity existed for its production? And what has led the author to its publication? I will endeavor briefly to state the circumstances which have induced me to take this course.

Some time ago, after a close perusal of Elliott's great work, entitled, "Horæ Apocalypticæ," I inserted a review of it in the "Montreal Witness," with the design of calling the attention of Biblical scholars to that learned production. At the close of that article I remarked, "it would be an essential service if some one, who has the leisure and the ability, would prepare an epitome of this learned effort. The results of the laborious research and learned criticism, without the details, would form a most pleasing and useful volume." At that time I had no design to attempt any thing of that kind myself. Afterwards I preached two distinct series of discourses on this portion of Holy Writ; one on the seven epistles, and another on the main body of the book. These discourses were listened to with great interest, and were felt to be important by the audiences. Many flattering encomiums were bestowed upon them; and I was frequently

requested by individuals, whose judgment I had reason to respect, to commit them to the public, through the medium of the press.

In essaying to follow out these suggestions, I must explain, however, that I have not attempted to abridge Mr. Elliott's elaborate work, occupying as it does four large 8vo volumes. I have followed it generally, especially in the first portions, compiling an analysis of every important topic, leaving out his elaborate arguments in confutation of other views, and in confirmation of his own, and adopting for the most part the results, rather than detailing the process. Hence there is no important particular that I have left unnoticed. Dr. Cummings has characterized Mr. Elliott's production as "a noble and precious work:" and this it is in fact; he says, "I shall beg and borrow from the book of Mr. E. all I can." And whosoever has read both these authors will decide that he has well carried out this purpose. Indeed Dr. C.'s work is a much closer, and more literal transcript of the original, than the work now issued, for both belonging to one school of interpreters, he very rarely differs from Mr. E., and pushes on some things to a conclusion more rashly than Mr. E.'s prudence would allow him.

But having enlisted in the project, I thought it proper, instead of barely epitomizing the work in question, to examine every point myself, as far as my time, means and ability, would allow. I have simultaneously analyzed several other works on the same subject, as well as having examined every thing within my reach, bearing on the several sub-

jects discussed, and have selected, blended, and with a great deal of compression, combined all these with my own views ; so that I may be warranted in asserting that this work expresses my own sentiments. And although I have a good deal used, in many places, Mr. E.'s phraseology ; yet that itself, to a considerable extent, is the phraseology of previous writers.

There are several views and sentiments in Mr. E.'s commentary with which I do not coincide, especially in his Pre-millennial views of the advent of Christ, his personal reign, the literal gathering of the Jews to Palestine, the first and second resurrection, and the time and order of the reconstruction of the earth ; with several other points. And there are many things in this little production not to be found in Mr. E.'s or any other writings which I have consulted. Those persons who are familiar with writings of this kind cannot fail to recognize many things of this nature in the volume now issued. I shall not even enumerate these points ; only noting that I am firmly assured in my own mind that they are improvements.

Indeed circumstances of this kind are among the principal reasons for the existence of this publication. Mr. E. and Dr. C. are generally admirable as far as the fulfilled portions of the revelations go. There had never been anything in these respects equal to Mr. E.'s exposition previously published. But the press groans under writings of a Pre-millennial character, and I felt deeply anxious that there should appear some thing on the Apocalypse containing

views on the other side of the question. We particularly wanted a sound, brief, and cheap exposition on these principles. Such a work ought to have fallen into abler hands, and with some one having more leisure to perform it: but in the silence of such, I have done what I could to supply that desideratum. And if those who are skilled in studies of this nature think the present production at all worthy of attention, for the reasons assigned, some pains ought to be taken to circulate it.

I might very easily have entered more into elaborate detail, but this would have frustrated my object, viz., that of furnishing such a book on the subject as would, in price, come within the means of any one, and not be too bulky to deter those in active life from its perusal. I am somewhat afraid that my great anxiety to accomplish all this has led to a too great condensation, so as to produce obscurity, and to deprive the style of ease.

Perhaps I may say, without being charged with presumption, that considering matter, size, and price, there is no work where there is so much information on the distinctive features of the portion of scripture it professes to explain as will be found in the work now offered to the public.

In the present day it is important that every one should distinctly apprehend what God is about to do in the earth. He has given us distinct notice of it, and has pressed us to consider it.

I have often wondered that ministers of the Gospel do not make prophecy more a special matter of study. Let us just consider how large and special a

portion of scripture it occupies, and it surely should not be disposed of in a summary manner. The public mind yearns to grasp the extraordinary—the spiritual in the future. This, I cannot avoid regarding as indicative of the speedy fulfilment of those predictions, as though God, who has revealed so much of the future, is leading the way to the actual development of them, by implanting an anticipation of coming events in the minds of men, as signifying their approaching consummation. This yearning after the future is the reason why any wild theory is so readily received; and why all the vagaries of second Adventism, Millerism, Mormonism, and spirit rapping, have become so rampant. Have not we, ministers, been partly to blame for all this. We have refused the people that sound development of the foreshadowings of the future, which the word of God furnishes. Instead of grasping these prophetic disclosures, and judiciously developing their contents, by which we might have satisfied the desires of their minds, we have been silent, and have left the matter in the hands of cunning, designing, and reckless men. In this book, I trust, there is enough of what is directly in opposition to all this, derived from the sure word of prophecy itself, so as to render it decisively *a book for the times*.

This book, such as it is, has been written while the author has been engaged in the full and active exercise of the Christian Ministry. More leisure might have enabled me to make it more worthy of public perusal;—many of the ideas introduced might have been better developed, or more clearly evolved.



I trust critical, yet candid men, will make every allowance, considering existing circumstances.

Before I close these remarks, I beg to express my deep gratitude to my esteemed brother-in-law, the Rev. Wm. Scott, who has, at much cost of time and labour, conducted it through the press. Being at a distance from the place of publication, I could not have done this myself. But what was impracticable on my part has been well and efficiently performed by him. And my gratitude is much deeper when I reflect, that from his mental qualifications and literary acquirements, Mr. Scott might have been much more appropriately occupied in original compositions on his own account.

The work has, in the number of pages, gone much beyond the conditions of the prospectus, but as the publication is designed for usefulness, and not pecuniary profit, the price will not be increased.

I think I have had in view sincerely the Divine glory in this labour, and I conclude by humbly beseeching God to give it his blessing.

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**ERRATA.**—A few errors have escaped the vigilance of the Edi-  
tor, and the reader is requested to make the necessary  
corrections.

Introduction, page xv., 5th line, for Hans read Huns.  
Page 91, line 3, insert "the" before "great."  
" 96, " 23, " "from" " "them."  
" 170, " 10, for "profeited," read "forfeited."  
" 223, " 13, " "kings," " "things."  
" 240, " 9, " "Dominitian" " "Domitian."  
" 264, " 24, before "sealed" read "not."  
" 276, " 6, for "Lucinius" " "Licinus."  
" 276, " 17, " "avengement" " "arrangement."  
" 348, " 31, " "now here" " "no where."  
" 492, " 2, " "life" " "live."

## INTRODUCTION.

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WHAT a wonderful Book the Divine Spirit has furnished, for the use and instruction of man. The Apostle had represented to him, in a grand prospective drama, the occurrences which were to take place in the church ; and in the world, as far as they would have any influence on the church, in all succeeding ages. It is a scenic revelation of future realities. It contains a symbolic panorama, changed to suit the progress of the subject.

Interpreting the Book of Revelations is, in fact, simply deciphering a collection of hieroglyphics. with a due regard to their grouping, their order, and their association ; and by deliberately comparing their parallels, as occurring in other places, some certainty may be attained. Each portion of this scenic imagery has, unquestionably, an important emblematical meaning.

It is a singular opinion of some expositors of scripture, that it is a proof of superior wisdom to pass by the Book of Revelations altogether. Dr. Whitby remarks: " Scaliger was pleased to say, Calvin was wise because he did not write upon the Revelations." He confesses, for the want of wisdom, he himself refrained from doing so. Dr. A. Clarke asserts that he, at one time, had resolved not to touch it ; but, on

more mature reflection, he thought he might be able to illustrate the phraseology. But, be it remarked, that both these writers, viz., Calvin and Clarke, shine any where more than in the illustration of prophetic revelation ; and Whitby appears to come under the same observation. Notwithstanding the havoc, wild and enthusiastic men have made of the prophetic scriptures, we are far from thinking that such portions of the sacred writings ought to be laid aside, or that we are to make no use of them whatever. They are a part of what God has caused to be written for our learning. Jesus Christ has here made us a present of inestimable truth ; and it would not be very modest, through feigned humility, to tell the Divine Communicator, He has mistaken our powers of apprehension, and has written us such unintelligible jargon, that we are not able to use the gift aright, and therefore we will have nothing to do with it ! The Revelations were made to man—to man *as he is*. When Jesus Christ commands to search the Scriptures, he makes no exception to the prophetic parts, but rather especially directs to them as a testimony of himself.

Much has been written on the date of this Book, some fixing it before the destruction of Jerusalem, and others after that event. I shall not here enter upon the lengthy, laboured, and learned arguments on either hand, but simply state, after due consideration of the subject, that I agree with those who think the Book was written after Nero's death (A.D. 61,) and that, consequently, the persecutions alluded to in it could not be Neronic ; also, with those who think it was written subsequently to the destruction of

Jerusalem, and consequently that event could not be the catastrophe.

That St. John should say any thing concerning Ecclesiastical History, and more especially about Secular History; about Hans and Alens, &c., is much doubted by some. But why so? Did not Daniel say much about Assyrians, Grecians, and Romans? He was shown things which should be hereafter. And why should it not be so in the case of the Revelations to John?

The catastrophe is the destruction of Antichrist. There may, however, be minor catastrophies, such as the melting away of Mohammédanism.

From the time of the recommencement of the vision, historic narrative traces the events predicted, as far as fulfilled; and from thence we may ascertain how far the prophecy has run its course, and what yet remains future, and consequently, to what part of the course of the predicted events the present times are related. It is this which renders the book of Revelation so very interesting a study.

There is a wide diversity in the schemes of interpretation adopted by different classes of Expositors. We may distinctly notice *four* main classes.

#### 1. THE PRETERISTS :

This class makes the prophecy stop short of the grand catastrophe—the overthrow of Antichrist. Some of these consider the catastrophe to be the overthrow of the Jewish nation; others consider it to be the overthrow of Pagan Rome; while others adopt both.



## 2. THE FUTURISTS :

Writers of this class carry the scenes far into the future. They make all its symbols to refer to events that are immediately to precede, or to accompany Christ's second Advent.

## 3. THE PRE-MILLENNIALISTS.

The advocates of this scheme admit that the grand catastrophe is the destruction of Antichrist, but they suppose that Christ will personally appear to perform that work; and that, after the grand final contest, he will renovate the earth, raise all the righteous dead, will personally reign at Jerusalem, and bring all the Jewish nation there, as his principal officers, and afterwards, that he will bring all the Gentile nations to submit to him by the exercise of regal sway, cutting off those who refuse submission.

## 4. THE MILLENNIALISTS.

Those who embrace this scheme are of the opinion that the whole, or the greater part of mankind, will be spiritually subdued to allegiance to Christ, by moral means, partly before, and partly after the infliction of God's judgments on Antichrist, and other opponents to his gospel: and that there will be a happy state of things introduced, to continue for 1000 years, as a reign of righteousness. During this time Satan will be restrained from his fatal work of tempting mankind, and that, possibly, great moral and physical alterations will take place among men, and in the world. At the close of these 1000 years, Satan will be loosed from his restraint, and that he will seduce great multitudes of men, who will be destroyed. And that then the

general resurrection and judgment, the renovation of the earth, and eternal blessedness will follow.

Among the Preterists, there are several shades of opinion. In this class of Interpreters are to be placed Grotius, Hammond, Prof. Wetstein, and many other German scholars. Many Roman Catholic writers have favored this scheme. It appears to have had its origin with the Jesuit Aleasar, and was advocated by Bossuet. Prof. M. Stuart, following Eichhorn, and others, may be said to belong to this school; but he combines three catastrophes, including those which are still future. The Futurist scheme was adopted by the Jesuit Ribera, for the purpose of refuting the Protestant application of Antichrist to the Church of Rome. Romanists were stung with the clear evidence the Revelations afford on this point, and must needs do something to blunt the keen edge of this weapon, and hence have so readily adopted these two counter schemes. Of late years, this scheme has been brought into note by Mr. Maitland, and Mr. Burgh, who have been followed by Mr. Newman. It has been strongly advocated by the Plymouth brethren. The system involves several absurdities, either as compared with itself, or with the general tenor of Scripture. The doctrines of the Pre-millennialists have had many able pens employed in their advocacy, both in the churches of England and of Scotland, and some elsewhere. The able and learned work of Mr. Elliott is of this class, although he does not carry things to so great an extreme as some of his contemporaries. The eloquent Dr. Cumming has warmly followed

Mr. Elliott in advocating the same theory. The millennial scheme is supported by Mede, Sir I., and Bishop Newton, Whiston, Faber, and many eminent writers of the past and present age. Later writers in this class, have thrown a great increase of light on the subject. The Rev. D. Brown, A. M., of St. James's Free Church, Glasgow, in an excellent work, in which he combats the errors of the opposite scheme, has clearly illustrated the subject. The writer of the present work does not scruple to identify himself with this class.

Interpreters of prophecy in general, are often classed as *Literalists* and *Spiritualists*; the former take every figure and symbol in its literal sense; and the latter consider them, except where there is internal evidence to the contrary, in a figurative, or symbolical sense. The Pre-millennialists are *Literalists*; and Millennialists are, for the most part, *Spiritualists*.

What is called the *church scheme of the seals*, is held by some Pre-millennialists. They regard the Seals as being entirely applicable to the state of the church; and the Seals and the Trumpets as chronologically parallel lines in prophecy, each reaching to the consummation; the Trumpets referring to the *World*, and the Seals to the *Church*. They consider the Seals as a series of figurations, detached and complete in themselves, symbolizing the phases and fortunes of the church from its origin to the consummation: whereas the opposite gives a secular and a Roman application to them, betokening judgments and afflictions to the Roman world, having a

bearing on the church of Christ. How far this last interpretation is apt and correct, the reader will judge when he comes to peruse that part of the interpretation. This scheme is maintained by Parens, Vitranga, Woodhouse, Cunningham, and Bickersteth, and many others, most of whom are Pre-millennialists. The opposite view is taken in this work

Others again, suppose this book to consist of a triple series of prefigurations, chronologically parallel with each other, and each reaching to the consummation ; each, also, corresponding with those septennaries of the Seals, the Trumpets and the Vials. Vitranga combines this idea with the church scheme of the Seals. There have been other eminent men who have advocated this theory. Some writers, in addition to this triple series of prefigurations, consider the Seven Epistles as each prefigurative of successive stages of the Church. But nothing appears more plain than that the Great Head of the Church was speaking to each Church concerning its position and state at that time, or speaking of things that are, (*i.e.*, which were at that time;) and after this he said, "come up hither, and I will show thee things which shall be *hereafter*."

The Seals, Trumpets, and Vials follow in consecutive order, although one may begin before the other is entirely finished. The last Seal has been opened ; the last Trumpet is pealing its awful blasts ; the Sixth Vial has nearly emptied its showers of judgments, and the seventh is about to be seized by the angel hand : events are fast

hastening to their issue; "the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

## DISCOURSES ON THE APOCALYPTIC EPISTLES.

### DISCOURSE I.—PRELIMINARY.

REVELATION i. 11. —“ *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.*”

THE present discourse is intended to be preliminary, and will contain some remarks on scenes and characters, unfolded in the previous vision related in this chapter, necessary to be understood and remembered throughout the series.

The transactions of the Church of God often come before us in history; and every lover of Zion is interested in their perusal. There have been many movements and occurrences which, as it respects some of them, have been astounding; and, as it respects others, have afforded motives for gratitude and thanksgiving. Here we are admitted, as it were, behind the scenes; and are allowed to see the secret machinery in operation, and the Divine hand directing this machinery.

There were many other churches, which, at that time, had been founded; but only the *seven* here enumerated were addressed: perhaps, because they were a fair specimen of all others.

These churches were introduced by name. They

were situated in what is generally styled Asia Minor, and were established in seven celebrated cities of that region. Asia Minor is the peninsular portion of country lying opposite to Greece, formed by the Euxine (or Black) and Ægean seas; the latter better known by moderns as that portion of the Mediterranean sea termed the Archipelago. Sometimes the term Asia Minor comprehended only Ionia, lying across the Archipelago from Greece. But more generally the term was applied as above mentioned, and it was in the country designated by the larger acceptance of the term where the seven churches were situated.

The greater portion of these churches, although planted and inspected by Apostolic men, had fallen far into corruption, and are loudly called to repentance by their Divine Inspector. If they refused to obey the summons, they were threatened with extinction. Those churches, which were the most faithful, have still some existence; and those which were the most demoralized have sunk to the lowest degree of degradation. It is also a remarkable fact that these celebrated cities have either retained some degree of importance; or, have sunk into insignificance, in proportion to the Christian faithfulness of the churches planted within them. A barren waste--a few detached and wretched huts, or a miserable village, occupy the spots where once stood flourishing cities. The sites of the more faithful churches still present some appearance of wealth and prosperity. It would seem that the existence and welfare of cities; and, we may add, of countries

also, depend upon the Christian church. The fact, however, of the declension of these churches, is an impressive admonition to Christians of their tendency to corruption, and affords a warning of their danger, should the case actually occur. It urges, with trumpet tongue, the necessity for examination, watchfulness, and prayer.

At the time referred to, John was at Patmos, a barren rocky island, in the Ægean sea, contiguous to the localities of the seven churches; to which place he had been banished by the Emperor Domitian, for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ. The enemy of souls, by this step, aimed at nullifying the truth, and at checking its progress; but, as is ever the effect of opposition to the truth, it resulted in its furtherance. St. John was privileged to receive additions, of a most important nature, to revealed truth.

On the Lord's day—the Christian Sabbath, so called—John, having no Christian assembly to which he could resort, was engaged in meditation and prayer. He was in the spirit of devotion; and was specially influenced by the Holy Spirit of God. He had, no doubt, felt deeply concerned for the cause of Christianity generally, and more particularly for those churches of Asia where he had so long labored. During this exercise, and while under this influence, he heard behind him a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." The injunction was then laid upon him to commit the scene to writing, and to communicate it to the seven churches.



He turned to see from whence the voice proceeded, and saw seven golden candlesticks ; and, in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of Man, in sacerdotal habiliments, with the appearance of venerable majesty ; with eyes of penetrating wisdom, and with the symbol of purity in his providential arrangements. He heard a strong and sonorous voice, and beheld its symbol, a sharp two-edged sword, proceeding out of his mouth. In his right hand he held seven stars. His countenance, as he had seen it in the holy mount, shone as the sun in his strength. In short, his whole appearance was that of Majesty and Deity. The Apostle had no occasion to ask, "Who art thou Lord?" But, recognising him as the glorified Redeemer, he fell at his feet as dead. Thus, when Daniel, a man greatly beloved, was meditating on the state of the Jewish Church, and praying for its prosperity, he had remarkable manifestations and revelations : and thus, also, it is seen, had the beloved disciple John. And the more *we* feel for the church, consider and meditate on her interests, and pray and labor for her prosperity, the more shall we be encouraged by seeing God's movements in her favor.

We should, on the Lord's day at least, be in the spirit of devotion ; and be engaged in making supplication to him in the assemblies of his saints, if providentially permitted : and if circumstances do not admit of our engaging in public worship, we should, on that day especially, be engaged in private exercises of a spiritual character. If we do so, we

shall obtain a blessing: for “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.”

John was commanded, more than once, in this introductory vision, to write what he saw in a book; and to communicate it to the churches; and thus, not only were they put in possession of these important revelations, but they have been handed down to us also, for our instruction. What he was commanded to write, it is proper we should read and study. And he that hath ears to hear, is commanded to hear. We are to ponder, and to study, what the Spirit saith to the churches. May this admonition sink down into our hearts!

In this vision, and revelation, Christ was avowedly addressing himself with authority to the churches, and he designed to show us his intimate connexion with the church and its ministers: his administration of its affairs; and his control of all the movements and transactions in its behalf.

Let us notice, that by this scene, we are taught—

**I. RIGHT VIEWS OF CHRIST AS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.**

**II. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OFFICE AND WORK OF THE MINISTRY.**

**III. THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.**

**I.** We are presented with right views of Christ as the Head of the church. Christ, in this splendid manifestation of himself, claims our particular attention as standing in immediate connection with his church in her most minute affairs. John saw one like unto the Son of Man, with official designa-

tions ; and yet with a blending of **Divine characteristics**. Hence, notwithstanding the outbeamings of Divinity, he was in human form : God manifested in the flesh. In his deep humiliation this was perceptible ; but much more so after he was glorified. Perhaps there was some similarity to this appearance at the transfiguration, and at the time when he met Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus. Similar, also, in its leading characteristics, was his antecedent appearance to the prophet Daniel, (ch. x. 5, 6.)

In contemplating Christ as the Head of the church, it is proper that from this passage we should notice—

1st. A description of his *essential* character.

In his own declaration he claims the attributes of Deity—Eternity, Omnipotence ; and this claim is substantiated in the description of his appearance, for there is developed the attributes of Omniscience and Holiness. He is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning, or Originator, of the creation of God. He was before all things : before any created object had a beginning ; and was himself the creator of all things. He shall continue the same when all the revolutions of the world are concluded. He is essentially Holy ; his Holiness not being derived from any other source than his own nature ; it was inherent, absolute Holiness. His eyes were like a flame of fire ; bright and penetrating, implying Omniscience. In proof of this he informs each church, “I know thy works.” The justice of his procedure is asserted from the appearance of his feet like fine brass. He indeed can

justly claim the attributes of Deity : he thought it no robbery to be equal with God. It is, therefore, important for us to recognize that our Divine Redeemer has power and authority to do whatever he will in heaven and in earth.

2nd. An indication of his *official* character.

His offices certify his manhood, his messiahship, and the economy of grace. 1. He presents himself to John as the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession. This is shown,

(1.) By his *vestments*.

He was attired in the robes of the High-Priest. The Lord said unto Moses, "Thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, for glory and for beauty—a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office." (Exod. xxviii. 2, 4.) Under the ceremonial law the minister was a priest to offer sacrifices : In the Gospel dispensation Christ is the only High-Priest of our profession ; and he is here represented as attired in these habiliments. The office of priesthood has been prominent from the time of man's sin. It has been a standing evidence to mankind of their impurity and sinfulness ; and of their need of an atonement. Christ represents himself, by his apparel as discharging the sacerdotal functions. God appointed him to this office with an oath ; his functions are perpetual, his offering is one ; once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself ; and he ever liveth to make intercession for us.

(2.) By an allusion to his *atoning acts*. "I am

he that liveth, and was dead ; and behold I am alive for evermore," (v. 18.)

One now alive, who had been previously dead, must have experienced a resurrection. Moreover he must be of the human species ; for of no other rational creature is death predicated. And such an one to continue in life forever, without again tasting death, proves himself to be unique in the examples of humanity. Scripture records of several, a resurrection ; but they died again.

Men die as a penalty : but Jesus Christ died voluntarily, having never sinned. His death was a sacrificial death. Christ here reminds the churches that he is the " Messiah who was cut off, but not for himself," but to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to anoint the Most Holy. (Dan. ix. 24, 26.) By His resurrection from the dead he verified, and demonstrated his claim to Messiahship. He was declared to be the Son of God, with power, by the resurrection from the dead. Jesus Christ was the first human being that revived, and continued to live, after having died because of sin. He is the eldest son of the family, who has gone to take possession of the inheritance for himself, and in the name and behalf of his brethren. But there must be implied, in all this, that he has made full atonement for mankind. We observe further—Christ appears,

3rd. As possessing *administrative authority*, or *sovereignty*.

(1.) With regard to the affairs of the church.

Christ is "he that hath the key of David;" and "the keys of hell (*hades*) and of death"—"He that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth."

By these phrases we understand, that the uncontrolled administration of the church is in his hands. He calls and sends forth his ministers; he is present with them in the performance of their work; and in all Christian assemblies. He directs them in their sphere of labor, and removes obstructions from their path. He defends his church when in danger. He admits into his church, and excludes from it. No one can be a real member of his church unless he receive him as such, and inscribe his name in the Book of Life: and no one can continue to be a member of this spiritual community if he blot out his name from that record. In the prophecies of Isaiah, Eliakim is introduced as a type of Christ in his official character. He was to be clothed with the robe, and to be strengthened with the girdle; the government was to be committed into his hands: the key of the house of David was to be laid upon his shoulder: he should open, and none should shut; and he should shut, and none should open, (c. xxii. 21, 22.) Eliakim, the type of Christ, is invested with authority in, and over, the house of David; Christ, the antitype, is invested with authority, and power in, and over, the church, the house of God.

Among other official acts of our Lord, performed in his church, is that of determining the period of the probationary existence of each individual. He declared that he had the keys of *hades* and of death;

*i. e.*, he admits into the invisible world; and with him are the issues from life. He grants a varied proportion of probationary existence to every one. No man dies by chance. No one can take away the life of another without he permits it. He will allow to every one such a space of trial, as is the most suitable to his welfare. And the words further imply, that he will open the door of hades, where separate spirits have had their abode, and send them forth to rejoin their bodies. To him "belongs the issues from death." He is the resurrection and the life, and shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like his own glorious body. He will swallow up death in victory.

2. With regard to the affairs of the world.

The administrative authority of our Lord Jesus Christ extends to the affairs of the world as well as to those of the church. He is the ruler of all the the Kings of the earth. All the nations of the earth, with their kings and governors, are under his management and supervision; and all their movements will finally be subservient to the interests of the church and true religion. He checks and defeats; or furthers and succeeds them in their operations, as answers best his own designs; and will finally make all their schemes to promote his own purposes. He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. All this is beautifully and strongly illustrated by the narratives of the Old Testament. Nebuchadnezzar proceeds to Jerusalem, or to Tyre. His object is to subdue those cities, and to add them to his conquests. But, we are informed, God employed

him in this work to answer certain ends of his own : and he is styled God's servant, not because he designed to do God a service, for he only consulted his own inclination ; but because the work God wished to have accomplished was performed by him. Cyrus goes to Babylon, to desolate that city, and to establish his own empire. But the plan was formed in the councils of heaven. It was simply an introduction to the deliverance of Israel, and the re-edification of Jerusalem. He was appointed the Lord's shepherd, to do his pleasure, more than a century before his birth. And, even the very method by which he should accomplish his object, was predicted this length of time before the event occurred, (Isa. xlv. 27.) The Lord declared that he would strengthen him, and go before him—and prepare his way; and all for Jacob's and Israel's sake. Sennacherib designed the destruction of Jerusalem ; but God had not sent him, and the destroying angel cut off, in one night, 185,000 of his army ; on which occasion he turned back again to Nineveh. Rabshakeh breathed vengeance against Israel ; but he had no Divine commission for his work. On the contrary, " thus saith the Lord, Behold I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land." We see, noticed in history, four great and successive monarchies swaying the destinies of the civilized world. But, we perceive by the previous predictions of prophecy, that the whole was a divine arrangement. God appointed them their limits, and fixed their several periods of prosperity. We have cited sufficient to illustrate the fact, that



the Divine Being administers the affairs of the world in reference to the true interests of his own people. And these, and other portions of sacred history, which might be selected, place the subject in a luminous and impressive point of view. This is still his purpose, as we are assured by many portions of the New Testament. The 2nd Psalm is a short epitome of the whole work and design of Messiah. Oppositions to him are noticed—plans and devices are formed, by kings and rulers, against Christ, and his people. But the Lord views all with contempt. He will dash them in pieces like the most fragile thing; and, despite all their rage and malice, the Lord says: “Yet, have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” He declares, that at the request of his Son, he will enlarge the sphere of his dominion to the remotest bounds of the earth. “All power,” says Christ, “is given unto me in heaven, and in earth.”

How forcibly are the words of the Apostle illustrated by these allusions. Addressing the church, he says, : “All things are for your sakes.” All events transpire--all things exist for the main purpose of promoting the establishment and welfare of the church of God. The Apostle elsewhere asserts, “Christ is the Head over all things to the church.” How instructive would history be, if it were written on this principle! then would the decline and fall of empires be seen to have other causes than those assigned by historians.

A due consideration of these truths would be a sovereign balm to the mind of a believer against alarm and consternation, occasioned by the threat-

ening aspect of affairs which is often now felt. The present day presents startling features in the movements of the kingdoms of the earth. We feel prompted, though with diffidence, to give expression to a few thoughts on this subject. We would say, perhaps God is commencing his final controversy with all flesh. There appears to exist, amongst Anti-Christian powers, a combination against liberty and Protestantism. A conspiracy is apprehended to exist among the Roman Catholic powers of Europe against England especially, as nearly the only European State which maintains liberty and true religion. But what events are we to expect from the revelations of Christ, respecting Rome, the mystical Babylon? We would direct your attention to the 17th chapter of Revelation. There we are presented with a vivid picture. The beast, or the system of Popery; the woman sitting upon the beast, upon many waters, or Rome, the head or seat of empire: the woman, or the great city ruleth over the kings of the earth. Here is a crowd of figures and facts. They will hereafter require our attention, but for the present, be assured events are tending to that retribution, when the "ten horns shall hate the whore and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire"—ver. 16.

But to return. This portion of Scripture also exhibits Christ to us as *the great teacher and prophet of his church*.

Thus, he announces himself as the faithful and true witness; he who bears testimony, and that to truth of the greatest importance. He styles

himself also the Amen, *i. e.*, the testimony he bears is true, and shall be accomplished. In the days of his flesh he affirmed, that he had lain in the bosom of his Father, and that he came to declare him to mankind. "To this end was I born," said he, "and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

Thus we have a distinct revelation of Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

The scene to which we have been admitted, furnishes us with views of—

## II. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OFFICE AND WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

The leading term by which ministers are distinguished, is *Angels of the Churches*. The term signifies messenger. This is a name by which they are frequently designated. They are God's messengers to the churches. "To whom (the Gentiles) I send thee."—Acts xxvi. 17. "As my Father sent me, even so send I you," (John. xx. 21.) They are the bearers of important intelligence. It is their business to examine themselves as to the validity of their commission, lest God should say, "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran;" but to be enabled confidently to say, "I AM hath sent me unto you."

The Christian Church Polity follows rather the model of the Synagogue than that of the Temple. There was an officer in the Synagogue answering to this office, called especially by this name. It was his business to read the scriptures; to offer up public prayers; to teach, instruct, and exhort the people. His functions answer exactly to those of ordinary

Christian ministers. But, it appears by these Epistles that the officer addressed in each one, had, added to these functions, which were those of the third officer in the Synagogue, that also of the first, the "Ruler of the Synagogue," who had the chief direction of all the affairs connected with the institution. Where there was more than one minister in any church or locality, as at Ephesus, (See Acts. xx. 17,) one was constituted overseer or superintendent.

Many figures are employed in the word of God to illustrate the nature of the Christian ministry, and the relations and duties of ministers. These before us are very significant. They are represented as stars in the right hand of Christ. "The seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand are the angels of the seven churches." By this is intimated that they are lights—stars—not suns. Christ is the Sun of Righteousness, the original source of all light and information. Ministers are subordinate, yet important lights. By their exhibition of divine truth, it is intended that they should shed a clear light upon mankind.

The position they occupy is important, and demands our attention. They are in the right hand of Christ. They are selected, they move, and are directed by him. He calls them to their work: he guides and directs them, protects and supports in the prosecution of it: he distributes them to their several spheres of labor. The right hand is a symbol of power; and from their position, in his right hand, we learn that their ministry is connected with his power.

But what are ministers without the Holy Spirit.

Christ makes an important declaration when he says (ch. iii. 10) that he has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars. These were not seven created spirits; but as seven is a number of perfection, he intends to denote, by the expression, the infinitely perfect Spirit of God. He also intends to express that every true Minister has the Holy Spirit: *seven spirits and seven stars*; every star having the Spirit. He sends the Holy Spirit according to his promise made before he left this world. He sends *both together*. He does not, to any considerable extent, send the Holy Spirit without the ministry of the word. It has never come to our knowledge that there has ever been any display of the work of conviction or conversion, where there has been no exercise of the Gospel Ministry; and but very little of these important effects are realized under a mutilated gospel. And Christ does not send a minister of the Gospel without the Holy Spirit to accompany him. If a minister is not accompanied by the Holy Spirit, he has not been sent by Christ, under whatsoever other circumstances he may come. Some, so called ministers, place their whole dependence on the fact, that the hand of one, who can, as he supposes, trace his descent from the Apostles, has been placed upon his head. This is a fallacious claim. Discarding the method of wearing an imaginary chain of numerous links, which may have been broken a hundred times, we go to the origin, the Great Head of the Church, and his Holy Spirit. We ought not to make our claim, as successors of the Apostles, on the ground of a regu-

lar descent from these holy men ; but as having been personally and individually appointed by Christ himself to the work. Our claim is higher and more dignified than that of the individuals referred to. To hold an office, without the sanction of him whose right it is to appoint, is evidently to climb over the wall, and gives us a right to the title he announces of being thieves and robbers. Oh ! fearful position ! And, let us ever remember, Christ is strictly noticing whether His Spirit is sought and claimed by professed ministers ; and what are the effects of their ministry.

Touch not the Lord's anointed—those who have the unction of the Holy Ghost in their administrations, for Christ has them in his right hand ; and will protect them, and punish their adversaries.

This scene also impresses us with—

III. THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. On this I remark :

1st. The term church, as at present understood, is very ambiguous, and we should endeavour at all times to have a clear idea of it, and to express the idea correctly. 1st. Sometimes by the use of a metonymy, by which the container is put for the contained, we term the building, in which we assemble for worship, the church. But the word does not bear this sense in the Scriptures. We read of a church in a house ; and it would be a strange notion if the building were implied. It seems not a little uncouth to use the figure of speech in reference to this object ; for it does not appear at all analagous to call a building an assembly.

2nd. In some quarters the term implies the Clergy. But neither is this the scriptural idea. St. Paul writes to the churches; and Jesus Christ addressed these Epistles to the Angels of the churches, with an evident intention to influence the body of Christians by those addresses. The term *cleros*, as applied to persons, in the New Testament, occurs but once, (1 Pet. v. 3,) and then it applies to what is now termed the *laity*; the heritage, or God's peculiar portion,—his people. And, in the Old Testament, God's people were termed his heritage, or clergy. God was said to be the heritage of the Levites, because that which was devoted to God became theirs. But no where is the tribe of Levi called God's heritage, and, on the other hand, the term is often applied to the body of the people.

3rd. The term church is probably derived from the Greek *kuriakon*, or, *the house of the Lord*. Almost every European language has a word, with this meaning corresponding to it. But the word church, as it stands in our version of the New Testament, is the translation of the Greek word *ecclesia*, which signifies an *assembly*. The word congregation, in the Old Testament, has the term *ecclesia* corresponding to it in the Septuagint. As the Septuagint was familiar to the writers of the New Testament, there is no doubt that they used this word in the same sense. It seems, therefore, anomalous to translate the word which signifies the assembly, by the one which signifies the building. It confounds the ideas, and leads to indistinctness of understanding.

The word occurs 75 times in the Septuagint, and invariably applies to a congregation, or to an assembly of persons of various characters; and especially to the whole congregation, or body of Israelites. In the New Testament it occurs 111 times. It applies to the whole church of God, or to particular congregations in a given place. Three times it is applied to a heathen assembly, as at Ephesus. In review of all this, we may assert that the proper scriptural meaning of the term church, is the assembly of God's people, and includes the idea of the assembling, or meeting together, of God's people; so that refraining from this act, unchurches an individual.

A church is an organization, and as such must have a government. There has been much controversy as to the scriptural order of that government. Some are confident that they see, in the Scriptures, Diocesan Episcopacy, and a divine right for its exercise, to the exclusion of every other kind of church order; others are as certain they see Presbyterianism; and others, again, can see nothing but Independency. Perhaps we might not really discover any fixed order at all, but a little diversity or variation in different places, verging between superintendency, and the exercise of the authority of co-ordinate officers. We shall not, in this place, pursue any investigations on this subject, but only just give expression to a thought which is suggested in this portion of Scripture. We perceive here seven churches, all situated in a limited space of country—such a space as would be about sufficient to form a modern diocese, and yet we find no bishop



addressed as the presiding officer. Had there been one, no doubt he would have been addressed, as well as the other angels or pastors; yea, no doubt principally, if not solely addressed. We must suppose such a minister would have been held principally responsible for the management of such affairs as are here reprehended. We see an angel or pastor presiding over each church, and addressed as the responsible person, and not accountable to any other person. We should say, then, that the limits of each place appears to form a charge. When St. Paul visited Miletus, he sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus. He appears to address them as the responsible persons, not one in particular. Had there been a Bishop at that place, in the Episcopal sense of that term, no doubt he would have been summoned exclusively, or, at least, in conjunction with his principal Elders. The fact of the case shows there was no officer answering to a modern bishop there. Yet there was an officer at the time our Lord addressed them, charged with the chief oversight, or superintendency. And it does not certainly follow that each church was absolutely independent in itself. One church seems connected with another; and it is certain there were persons in the primitive church, who had official authority to regulate the affairs of various individual churches, which would not have been allowed, if there had been absolute independency. To use an illustration, not without significancy, although not direct as an argument, the *lamps* were all connected together in one piece of mechanism. These churches are sym-

bolized by seven golden candlesticks, or lamps in their stands.

The church is the vehicle of the might and power of the Holy Spirit, through which he is to act and shine. There is a reference to the services under the law, (Ex. xxv. 3, &c.) A golden candlestick was, by express command of God, to be made ; with six branches and seven lamps ; and to be put in the holy place, opposite the table of the shew-bread. The prophet Zechariah informs us he was shown a golden candlestick with seven lamps. This is said to prefigure the might and power of the Holy Spirit, before which all impediments are as nothing, (c. iv. 8.) There had long been a cloud on that church ; but now better days were beginning to dawn. We are taught, by our Lord, that this candlestick is a symbol of the church, and that the light of the Holy Spirit is to shine on and through the church.

The Church is the light of the world, as our Lord elsewhere bears testimony. God's people are as a city on a hill, and their good works are visible to all. They are to be a candle in a candlestick ; not hid under a bushel ; not obscure in its position ; but each member to act, to shine. The Church casts a beautiful light on the world by her worship, her doctrine, and her practice. What would the world be without it !

The lamps in the Jewish services were to be supplied with pure olive oil, emblematical of the influences of the Holy Spirit, without which all is darkness. The light must not be gloomy, but bright. There ought not to be any mixture with Gospel

truth. In these Epistles Christ has shown his anxiety on this subject.

The lamps were to be kept perpetually burning. The results of the Spirit's enlightenment and quickening are to be continually seen in the church of God. These effects are mostly periodical and evanescent. There ought to need no revival; for there should be no deadness; but a constant stream of light and influence. These lamps are oftener extinct, or at least yielding but a flickering light, than burning with a steady blaze.

The material of which the candlestick was constructed—pure gold—declares the value of the church. Gold is the most valuable of all metals, and the standard of value for the rest. Its worth is founded on its purity. God would not employ any thing common in the construction of his house, and gold was freely used, which is not at all used in ordinary things. Those who would serve God acceptably must be separated from common objects, and be devoted entirely to God. His people have always been marked as a special people; and holiness to the Lord must be the motto inscribed alike on the mitre of the Holy Priest, and on the bells of the horses.

Jesus Christ was in the midst of the seven candlesticks. By this he gives us assurance that he is intimately associated with his church. Thus he had previously asserted that where two or three were found met together in his name, he was in the midst of them. He narrowly inspects their affairs, and is deeply interested in all their proceedings.

We are impressed, by the foregoing review, with the dignity of the character of our Divine Head. As we are convinced of his essential Divinity, we rest assured of his ample qualifications to do great things in the church and in the world, and which, it is predicted, he is destined to perform.

We have ground for encouragement by considering the intimate connexion subsisting between Christ and his ministers and the church. And, when we contemplate his lively interest in their concerns, we may be both encouraged, and stimulated.

We ought to be affected with the great importance of our connexion with Christ, as members of his church. The due consideration of this fact should act as a motive to arouse us to corresponding co-operation with him.

In these Epistles we have a review of the state of each church, by its great and Divine Head. He is constantly inspecting every church, and passes his impartial judgment on each. These judgments, pronounced in such impressive terms, will form the subjects of succeeding discourses.



## DISCOURSE II.—THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS.

EXCELLENCIES COMMENDED—DEFECTS CENSURED—ADVICE TENDERED  
—CAUTION SUGGESTED—ENCOURAGEMENT ADMINISTERED.

REV. II. 1-7.—“*Unto the Angel of the Church of Ephesus write ; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks ; I know thy works, and thy labor, 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 hast found them liars : and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. 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.*”

EPHESUS was a very rich, prosperous, and distinguished city. It was the capital of Ionia, and of the entire Roman province. It stood on the river Cayster, near to the sea coast, between Smyrna and Miletus. It was once the emporium of that part of Asia situated on the North side of the Taurus.

The people were very wicked, being addicted to the arts of sorcery and magic ; and were noted for their luxury and lasciviousness. They “walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience,” (Eph. ii. 2.) Idolatry was practiced with pomp and

splendor. The temple of Diana, famous throughout the world, towered in stately dignity, and drew numerous worshippers to the supposed deity. The inhabitants of the entire city were the Neocoros, or the devoted and consecrated servants of the great goddess Diana: and they boasted that they possessed an image of the goddess, which descended from Jupiter.

This formerly celebrated city is now in entire ruins. A few corn fields are scattered along its ancient site, which is marked by some large masses of shapeless ruins and stone walls. Towards the sea extends the ancient port, now a pestilential marsh.

About 400 years ago, a small town was built about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the remains of the city, of materials from Ephesus. Of this town only a few huts remain. These huts retain the name of Ajasaluk, a Turkish word of the same import with Ephesus, signifying the city, or temple of the moon.

The church at this place was planted by St. Paul. This indefatigable man of God first visited Ephesus after he left Corinth in A.D. 56 (Acts. xviii. 19-21.) At this visit he continued only for a short period; for, although strongly importuned to abide a longer time, he did not consent, but left them with a promise to visit them again after he had kept the feast of Pentecost at Jerusalem. In the meantime, the city was visited by Apollos, who at that time was not fully initiated into Christianity. Paul fulfilled his promise during the same year. He found about twelve persons, who had not received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He continued three years,

preaching with great and astonishing success, (Acts. xix.) On leaving them, after this his second and extended visit, he left Timothy there. He had perceived a tendency to unsound doctrine, and had discovered that some among them had already imbibed the curious, speculating, judaizing spirit, and were beginning to propagate it. There was a love for the silly fancies and legends of the Jewish Talmuds, and a passion for tracing genealogies. Foolish questions and vain janglings arose out of these practices, all calculated to divert their attention from the Gospel, and to corrupt its genuine doctrines. Although he was himself under a necessity to depart, he desired Timothy to remain, and to charge them to desist from those speculations, and to preach nothing but the pure Gospel of Christ. It would appear that Timothy succeeded to a good degree, in putting things in order, for about one year afterwards the Apostle wrote his excellent epistle to this people, and in it he makes no serious complaints against them. If we compare the Epistle to the Ephesians with that to the Galatians we shall, in this respect, perceive a striking difference. Yet about two years after penning his epistle, and three years from his departure from them, he was strongly apprehensive they were in great danger from causes of this nature. In the progress of a journey he called at Miletus, and sent to Ephesus, for the Elders, (Presbyters) who had an oversight, or superintendence of the church, and delivered to them a most solemn charge, (Acts. xx.) ♦He foretold, on that occasion, that after his departure grievous wolves would enter ;



and that some among themselves would arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples. From all this we may see how difficult a matter it is to nurture and mature a Christian church; and that the anxieties and cares of Pastors are great. And we may gather, from the whole of this detail, that a minister is often exceedingly useful, even when there is no remarkable ingathering of souls. A revival may take place, but, if the subjects of it are not preserved, it is of but little use; and those ministers who build them up in the faith, and guard them from error, have performed a work equally as great as those who were the instruments of their conversion.

At the present day there is not the least vestige of a Christian Church at Ephesus: so entirely has Christ removed their candlestick.

There is one thing we shall have to remark, as we proceed through these epistles, which is, that our Lord introduces himself to each church by that title most suitable to the state of the particular church addressed. To this church, he introduces himself as, "He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." This people was in a state of declension which was inward, and not discernable by ordinary outward inspection. It was, therefore, proper to remind them of a close and rigid scrutiny. There were occasions for the exercise of patience, but Christ affords his perplexed and agitated ministers consolation, by assuring them that they have his immediate protection and support. Comparing St. Paul's epistle to this church, with this from our

Divine Head, it would appear that they had considerably declined in spirituality. Thirty-five years had elapsed since the time St. Paul had written his epistle ; and this space afforded time for corruptions. It is a lamentable consideration that religion should ebb and flow : that it should be sometimes active, and sometimes dormant : that it should be sometimes in vigorous existence, and at other times become totally extinct. It should, and it might, be always gloriously progressing. There is something seriously at fault somewhere, which is the cause of these variations. Alas ! how many souls perish, and will endure eternal misery, which might be saved forever, but for the unfaithfulness of ministers and people.

These Epistles are addressed to the Angels of the Churches. There is a difference of opinion as to whether they, with their reproofs, admonitions, and encouragements, were intended to apply to the chief minister, or angel ; or to include, with him, the whole body of the church. It is argued, by those who espouse the former opinion, that St. John is commanded to write to the angel of the church, and that a person is addressed in the singular number. But instances occur of persons being addressed in their aggregate capacity in this style. If we wished to send an epistle to any corporation, it must be directed to its President, or Chairman. If we would address any church, we must address its Pastor. St. John was directed to write what he saw, and send to the seven *churches*. We perceive, throughout these epistles, an appeal to the *aggregate* body, with

the *singular* address. Fear none of these things which *thou* shalt suffer: behold the devil shall cast *some of you* into prison." Some of the epistles cannot, in their matter, be restricted to the Pastor only. To Thyatira, after describing the atrocities of Jezebel, he adds, "But unto you, and to the *rest* in Thyatira, I say I shall put upon you no other burden, but that which *ye* have already." To Sardis, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead," evidently implying the majority, for there were more dead besides the Pastor, if that were his condition; for immediately he says, "Thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments." In the epistle to the Laodicean church, the lukewarm spirit has an evident application to the entire body of the people. Christ says, "as *many* as I love I rebuke and chasten: be (ye) zealous, therefore, and repent." And yet he says in the singular, thou sayest "I am rich;" "I counsel thee;" "Behold I stand at the door—if *any man* hear my voice." And in each epistle he calls upon any willing ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto *the churches*. And what is further evident, is, the denunciations appear to affect the entire body of the church to which it is addressed, as, for instance, "Repent or I will remove thy candlestick." It would be an incongruity to remove the members of a church, who were not chargeable with the Pastor's crime, for the crime of the individual Pastor. The same may be said of all the encouragements. We may I think conclude, that although each epistle commences by addressing the Pastor,

yet, that the general tenor shews a design to convey instruction to the whole of these several churches.

Yet we must allow that the angel, or chief minister, has the epistle directed to him; and that the reproofs and encouragements are eminently applicable to him. He is a highly responsible person, and the state of the church, in a great measure, depends upon his faithfulness or remissness. He had the power to put away evil doers, and to stop the mouth of iniquity. If he be not vigilant in warning his flock of evils in doctrine and practice in their rise, and thus to nip the error in its bud: in arousing and stimulating the church to activity: if he do not exercise a godly discipline, much evil may gain a footing among the people. The angel of this church had been faithful in repressing errors in doctrine; but it appears he had not done his utmost to stimulate his flock to diligence toward the attainment of growth in the divine life.

The title *angel*, as applicable to ministers, is of singular application. The word signifies *messenger*, both in the Hebrew and in the Greek. It is applied to any agency God employs to execute his purposes. In some passages it occurs to denote an ordinary messenger; it is applied to prophets and to priests, as well as to New Testament ministers. A minister has a message from God to the people. He is a messenger from God, and interpreter of his will, and shows to men the integrity of God's dispensations: the consequence is, grace flows to man, and man is delivered from the pit of destruction, through the ransom price paid by Christ.

It is not certain who was the Angel of this Church at the time under consideration. It is generally asserted that this office was sustained by Timothy. It is very probable that Timothy resided at Ephesus at that time: but he was an evangelist, who was sometimes sent to individual churches, on special business, and to effect special objects. But by his office he was not permanently connected with any particular church. His office was to travel any where to propagate the faith, to plant new churches, and to transact special business, for and in the churches, as occasion required. Timothy is supposed to have continued at Ephesus, perhaps as his principal residence, or as the head of his district, until A.D. 79, or one year after St. John had this vision, at which time, it is said, he suffered martyrdom in this city. St. John, himself, appears to have taken up his residence in Ephesus, perhaps, like Timothy, as his head quarters, from which he could conveniently visit the surrounding populous district, and numerous churches.

But we will now proceed to consider the particulars contained in this epistle.

#### I. THE MATTER OF COMMENDATION.

Christ commends all that is commendable in any person, or in any church; and he is careful to fix first upon those points which are worthy of commendation, before he proceeds to select those which ought to be reprov'd. He seeks the good and prosperity of his people, and adopts the most likely way of effecting it. To overlook all the good in any one, and to gather together all the evil, making that

the subject of censure, is almost certain to discourage any one from attempting reformation. Howsoever men may deal with us, Christ will never adopt this method of correcting our faults. This should teach us a lesson in performing the duty of reproof, when necessary to be administered. But how differently it is often executed!

Christ commends the Ephesian Church :

1st. For their *works*.

By the term *works*, in this place, we are undoubtedly to understand their practical accordance with the will of God, as expressed and enjoined in his revealed word : good works the fruit of faith. Faith must be accompanied by acts of obedience. The doctrine of justification by faith does not make void the law requiring good works, (Rom. iii. 31.) Some heretics make this doctrine the occasion of repudiating personal holiness. St. James shows the fallacy of such a monstrous opinion; and teaches that it cannot be real faith if there be no accompanying works. He shows the error of those who abuse the doctrine of justification by faith. The Apostle Paul shows that faith is the working principle, and love the instrument by which we work. "Faith worketh by love."

But, it may be inquired, if these professors had left their first love, how could they work at all? A pursuit of this enquiry may lead us to ascertain their real state. Jesus Christ does not charge them with an entire extinction of love, but that they had left their *first love* : they had not the same degree of love they at first possessed. But that they had some remains of it is evident from the following items of

praise. Many men will preserve a fair degree of conformity to God's law, and will manifest great zeal in labor, who yet have declined much in the fervour of love. And such persons are often the keenest for the observance of niceties of doctrine, and of the punctilios of practice: there is a biting acerbity and bitterness in their rebukes and reproofs, bestowed upon such persons as do not come up to their idea of the standard of exactitude. But yet, the Ephesian professors had the praise of Christ for their works: they were such as he approved, as far as they went.

2nd. For their labor.

This refers to their *acts* done for the cause of Christ. The church has a great deal committed to its trust. There are numerous acts to be performed for the good of the world. There are multitudes of heathen to be converted: there are many poor, sick, destitute, and those ready to be swallowed up in the vortex of misery, in their more immediate neighborhoods. The church must labor to save these outcasts. There are calls for visitors of the sick; for Tract Distributors; for Sabbath School Teachers; for Prayer Leaders; for Exhorters and Preachers; for Missionaries. The Heathen, and Mohamedan worlds are open to us in every part. Christians! labor for your Divine Master! He praised the Ephesians for their labor: he will love and value you for yours.

It is true, such labors will require some effort; some self-denial. They were of such a nature as might have caused the Ephesians to have "fainted,"

either to have sunk in exhaustion, or so to have wearied them as that they would have desisted: but still they labored on to Christ's satisfaction. 'I have seen thy untiring efforts; I have marked thy weary steps; I have noticed thy anxious attention.' An imitation of such conduct will secure similar approbation. Let us, therefore, not faint, but manifest that indomitable energy which will assuredly succeed.

3rd. For their patience.

The root of the Latin word, from which our word patience is derived, signifies to suffer. Hence it does not apply to any abstract quality of the mind, but to a state of trial from any cause, or to such circumstances as are likely to produce irritation. We cannot call that man a patient man whose life runs on like a calm, smooth stream. Its primary meaning is continuance, endurance, or having a long mind. Its current meaning is to suffer affliction, pain, toil, provocation, or any other evil, with a placid, calm, unruffled temper; enduring all untoward circumstances without murmuring or fretfulness. Patience, as a Christian grace, differs from constitutional fortitude, stoical apathy, or heroic pride. It consists, in its passive sense, in a submission to the Divine will, without opposition or uneasiness; and, in its active sense, in resignation or an acquiescence and contentedness with God's dispensations.

Continuous labor calls for patience: sufferings call for patience: provocations from the obstinacy, and perverseness of opponents, call for patience. In



each of these particulars the Ephesians manifested this grace. The occurrence of the term in v. 2 may refer to their labor. For Christ's sake, not from any selfish motive, they labored and fainted not. Some do those acts from motives of vain glory and ostentation; and others from motives of contention and strife, envy, and even malice, (Phil. i. 15, 16.) But the members of this church were worthy of praise, for they patiently labored for Christ's sake, from their love to Christ, and from their desire for his glory. In v. 3, the term most probably refers to their sufferings. Domitian's persecution in A. D. 95, might have affected them. This was but the year previous to the date of the apocalypse, and during its rage John was banished to Patmos. Whatever share of these persecutions they endured, they endured them patiently; and they do not miss of the commendation of Christ. From the whole tenor of the passage, it is evident they had much occasion for patience, from the conduct of false teachers. They had tried them, and had borne with their contradictions, insults, and oppositions, and had manifested an admirable degree of patience with them, for which they received a kind eulogium from their Divine Head.

In our day, we may not be exactly similarly situated. But we also have "need of patience." There are exhausting labors we ought to perform; there are many sufferings through which we must pass; and there are many contradictions of sinners we shall have to endure. Let us be careful patiently to perform the will of God, that we may inherit the

promises ; by patient continuance in well doing, let us seek for glory and honor, and immortality, that the august judge of quick and dead may at last say unto us well done, and reward us with eternal life.

In the third verse they are commended.

4th. For their arduous zeal in testing false pretenders, and in checking their pernicious influences.

Certain persons had made their appearance among them, who propagated false doctrine, and who indulged in vicious practice, and as a cover for their pernicious efforts they even pretended to apostolical authority. St. Paul had forewarned them of this evil. I shall find an occasion afterwards of describing this sect, and shall confine myself, at present, to the bare notice of the fact. The Ephesians would not sanction them. Erroneous views would not long survive if Pastors and people were to combine to frown upon them. The Ephesians had tested those pretended Apostles, and had found them liars : they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes. This was a proof of their own soundness in the faith, and of their love for the truth. And he who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks noted and approved of their conduct.

Whosoever put in a claim to be Apostles, or to be their true and genuine successors, must be tested. Their doctrines, labors, spirit, and conduct, must be compared with those of the Apostles : and if this be done, well indeed will it be if many of those who make such pretensions are not found liars.

In the third verse all these commendations are repeated in an inverted order, doubtless for the

sake of emphasis. It shows how earnest our Lord was to signify his approbation. His thoughts are not as our thoughts. If we see one thing wrong in a person, we can see nothing else right. All his excellencies are passed over. Like the fly, we pitch upon the putrid part, and revel in the noxious odour. But Jesus, while he faithfully reproveth us for that wherein we are deficient, yet will warmly commend us for what is good.

With this portrait before us, we might be almost inclined to say, this was a tolerably sound church. And indeed they had much good among them. Not so much could be said in commendation of many modern churches. Yet all this could not cover defects. We are too apt to plume ourselves on our excellencies. But let us consider, that any good qualities we may possess should never be the means of inducing us to neglect searching out our faults. Let us eschew them, for Christ will search them out, and will condemn them.

## II. THE CENSURE PRONOUNCED UPON THEM FOR THEIR DEFECTS.

We have already remarked, that it appears, from St. Paul's Epistle to this church, that at that time its members were eminent for piety and consistency. They were blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Their hearts were warmed with love, and in their conduct they manifested zeal. But now they had left their first love. St. Paul and Timothy had been particularly careful to guard them against false teachers, and pernicious doctrines; and it appears, from the pre-

ceding encomiums, not without success. But while guarding against outward evils, they had gradually neglected the inward spirit of vital piety. How many are the dangers of Christians! and in avoiding one class of evils how apt we are to fall into another!

*Love* is an essential feature in Christianity, the first fruit of Christian experience, the brightest in the train of Christian excellencies, and the motive power of all pious operations. *First love* is the love we first enjoy after conversion: it being then first shed abroad in the heart by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and is peculiarly memorable. It is striking from its own intrinsic excellence, and from the strong contrast it then first presents with the spirit of bondage it supercedes. There is a delight and an ardor in its exercise, arising from the freshness of the feeling and the newness of its emotion. First love is ardent, active, vigorous, self-denying, and unwearied. In the enjoyment of it a person is a happy, active Christian, and possesses the Divine approbation; "Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown," (Jer. ii. 2.)

The zeal and fervor of this love the Ephesians had left. They were in the category of those described by the Saviour, (Matt. xxiv. 12,) whose love would wax cold. Here Christ complains, "You are less fervent than formerly. There are not manifestations of warmth, life, activity, vigour and self-denial, as formerly." How melancholy to look back on any declension.

There may be some who, during the deep searchings of their hearts, are led to write this bitter thing against themselves, "My love to Christ is diminished:" and, in consequence, perhaps, they exclaim, "Oh that it were with me as in days that are past." And yet the lamentation may be altogether without foundation. True it is, love is a passion, and as long as it exists, it must exist with emotion, but, in its earlier stages, it may operate with more emotion, and in course of time may be regulated more by principle. In its component parts—esteem and desire—it engages both the intellect and the passions; and at certain stages of its existence, it may be discoverable more by the approval of the understanding, and the depth of veneration for the character of God, than by the impassioned movements of strong desire. In this case the perception will not be so vivid: yet, upon every recurrence to the obligations under which we lie to the Divine Being, there will be discoverable a principle for deep feeling, as though stirring the mass of the ocean, though not playing with turbulence on the surface or shore. There is such a thing, also, as being in heaviness through manifold temptation, and a necessity that thus it should be with us. And while labouring under a burden which damps, but which does not extinguish love, the sufferers mourn over what they consider their loss. But the trial having been endured passes away, and the heaviness removes with it; and to their joy they prove that their love has a more fixed endurance—a more permanent existence.

But, notwithstanding the granting of these provisos, there are many who do leave their first love ; and it seems to be the almost universal defect of our day. Where it does occur, the symptoms are easily traced. They may be comprehensively included under two prominent aspects.

1. Indifference to the provisions and means appointed for the soul's prosperity.

Duties become wearisome. If we were in a right state of mind we should take delight in approaching to God ; and should call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable : but, instead of this, the inquiry of persons in this state is, " When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn ? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat ? " Closet devotions are neglected, or imperfectly performed, and languidly pursued. They are unaffected by the thought of myriads being destroyed for lack of knowledge ; and make but feeble, if any efforts to snatch them as brands from the burning.

2. By a lively concern and undue interest in the things of this life.

The attractions of the world increase. They do not feel the force of the assertion of the Apostle, " If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The frivolities, pleasures, and unprofitable pursuits of this life, have obtained an absorbing interest, and the line of demarcation between them and the world is wider than formerly, and is still widening. If religion, in any measure, engages their attention, it is not the deep things of God, but non-essentials : if they contend, it is not for

the faith, but for questions which do not tend to edification: if they strive it is not for the mark of the prize of their high calling, but as to who shall be the greatest, and of the highest distinction.

No Christian ought to leave his first love; but, on the contrary, to increase and abound in it. There seems to be an opinion in some quarters that it is almost impossible to retain it; and that nothing afterwards can equal it. But the Apostle prays that it may be multiplied. Not that we may simply have an addition to it, but a multiplication of it. A thing which is multiplied, must, at least, be double its first quantity and degree; and it may be many times more. So that our first love may be very insignificant compared with our subsequent love. And the only way to keep what we have, is to strive after an increase.

Jesus Christ is now searching every heart. He is probably saying to some, individually, "*thou hast left thy first love.*" Let me seriously ask you, is this the case? Does the Holy Spirit speak this to your hearts? Do you hate sin as much now as formerly; or do you quarrel with the enactments of God's law as being too strict and stringent? are you earnestly desirous to be cleansed from all sin, and do you use means to acquire such a blessed experience? Do you feel you can press through mud, rain and snow, to the house of God, as once you did? or do you suffer little difficulties to prevent you? Do you pray as much as at first? are you as charitable and benevolent, and do you feel as much pity and sympathy for perishing sinners as once you did? Do you deny

yourself as much ; and do you delight yourself as much in the Lord as in the early days of your religious course ? your Divine Master knows : and howsoever you may endeavour to deceive yourself, you cannot be unconscious of your condition.

Be aware of every thing which can bring about this state of things. Let not the world absorb you. Beware of neglecting the means of grace, and of formality in them. Attend to secret prayer, to reading of the Scriptures, with self examination. Guard against self indulgence and unwatchfulness. And then will you prosper, and grow in grace.

But if we have really left our first love, still the Saviour is compassionate, and hates putting away. He offers us most seasonable directions. This is included in the succeeding topic.

III. THE SALUTARY ADVICE TENDERED, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen," &c.

In the remedial measures recommended by our Lord we are directed to a remembrance of the past—to a recognition and practice of present duty—and to the consequence of neglect.

If he, in whom dwells the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, directs to measures for the accomplishment of any object, we should expect them to be of a nature highly adapted to answer the end proposed. It would, therefore, follow, that the three steps here recommended are exactly suitable to the state of the Ephesians ; and, also, to the state of all similarly circumstanced.

1st. A remembrance of the past.

"Remember from whence thou art fallen."



Exercise reflection. To this duty we are often summoned; and we are as frequently warned of forgetfulness. Remember what he has done for you, and what deliverances he has wrought out for you. Remember all the way the Lord has lead you. In order to serve God remember him. (Eccl. xii. 1.) In order to keep the Sabbath, remember it. In order to maintain gratitude and vigilance, remember what you were, and what the Lord has done for you. The psalmist seems to consider that remembrance will be the grand cause of the Heathen turning to God. "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord." (Psa. xxii. 27.) The cause of their departure from God was forgetfulness, (Psa. ix. 17.) In this passage, and in many other places, in order to recover a former blessed state, we are called to remember. Remember what that state was you have lost: "call to remembrance the former days." Call to mind what you once were: reflect on your former happiness, and devotedness: remember from what degrees of faith, love and holiness, you have fallen. This would be a salutary practice. It would produce a lively conviction of our fall, by removing that vague and undefined indistinctness of the difference between our present and our former state.

According to the procedure of our intellectual powers and of our moral feelings, memory is brought into operation in restoring past feelings. We cannot form a judgment of any difference in our feelings at different times without perception; and in order to form a perception we must have a recollection of

what we once were ; then we can make a comparison between our present and former state. If it be at all deteriorated we have an immediate conviction of the fact. Hence the usefulness of this first injunction : the foundation of amendment is laid, and the work put in progress. Then follows,

2nd. A recognition and practice of present duty.

1. Repentance.

There can be no gratitude without a recollection of favors previously received : therefore, call to mind benefits formerly enjoyed. There can be no conviction of duty without a recognition of the terms, and sanction of the injunction : therefore, call to mind obligations. There can be no repentance, or regret for our short comings, and for blessings we have lost, without a perception of them : therefore, call to mind the high standard from whence you have deviated. Consider how tender was your conscience ! The consciousness of the least omission was fearful to your mind. How conscientious you were in duty ! How indefatigable were your exertions ! How fervent your love and zeal ! How bright were your hopes, and how solid was your peace ! And how high and rapturous were your joys. Certainly a remembrance of the past would bring you to repentance. Soon the heart would be melted into tenderness ; godly sorrow would operate ; and we should make strenuous efforts to recover ourselves.

2. The performance of first works.

It is probably intended, by this expression, to designate,—1. Works done *before conversion*. The

sentiment is, begin over again : act again the part you acted in the commencement of your Christian course. There is included in it an obedience to the injunction, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Break off all sin and commence a new course : mourn, weep, pray : seek the Lord with earnestness : believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with the heart unto righteousness. 2. Works done *immediately after conversion*. Then you were alive to God, zealous and active for your growth in grace, and to promote the spiritual benefit of others. Resume that position. Be as much in earnest as you were at that time. Deny yourselves ; take up your daily cross, and follow Christ in the regeneration. Attend strictly the ordinances of religion ; and live in union and communion with God. By a faithful attention to these directions, you will infallibly secure a restoration to all you have lost. To aid us in attention to those requisites, there is impressed upon us,

- 3rd. The consequence of neglect.

"Else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place." This directs us to a contemplation of the future. The past, the present, and the future are all pressed to yield their contributions in effecting a fallen believer's recovery. Considerations of what we have been ; of what we ought now to do ; or, otherwise, of what we may hereafter become, are each of them exercises highly proper ; and are proofs of the wisdom of the Great Teacher. They ought to furnish his

subordinate agents with hints for the direction of their conduct.

The candlestick, you will remember, symbolizes the church in its entire organization. You will also bear in mind that the church is represented as being eminently valuable. The symbol teaches us that it has light, and that it enlightens all around it. That light is the light of truth. The leading truths of revelation are ever to be distinctly exhibited, viz., man's sinfulness, and the all sufficient and infinite provision made by Christ for man's salvation. It is the design of the Divine Being, that there should be light in the church; and that it should be clear and distinct: that each member of the church should enjoy the comfort and delight of it: and that the church should afford light to others.

If it fail of enlightening others, the Head of the Church will remove it. Thou shalt no longer be a church, if thou do not let thy light shine, at least, with its former lustre. Depend upon it every dark church will be removed, although the Lord may bear long with them. The Romish, the Greek churches, and every other spiritual organization, which comes under the category of a dark church, will be removed. The Lord is even now shaking these systems of error preparatory to their removal. Many are the churches that have already been forsaken; and many are the places which have been left destitute of gospel light.

But reflect! how many and ill are the consequences of the removal of a church! Instruction is thus cut off, and the means of grace cease. The Holy Spirit

is in the church, and does not so signally manifest himself elsewhere ; but we should, in a great measure, be divested of his enlightening influences, if the candlestick were removed. Then we are indeed left destitute. Then, what examination, what repentance, what zeal, and what watchfulness are necessary for our recovery.

For some time after this warning, the Ephesian Church did flourish : and, therefore, they did repent. Subsequently, however, they fell lower than ever. Then it was that they were ruined and destroyed by internal heresies ; until, at length, the Saracens completely desolated them : and now Mohamedanism prevails over the whole country. Their lamp was removed. What a proof of the veracity of the word of Jesus ! and what a solemn warning to all professors of religion. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” There is a sense and a degree in which this rebuke will apply to individuals, as well as to communities. If any individual, therefore, is sensible of a declension, in any respect let him repent, and do his first works, lest God should bring him to desolation.

We will now consider—

IV. THE ENCOURAGING PROMISE MADE TO THEM.  
 “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”

Here there is an evident allusion to the tree of life in the midst of the earthly paradise. There is, we believe, no ultimate allusion to a material object, but it is used as a symbol of spiritual and eternal

good. It is not because it will afford aliment for sustaining life ; not because it will yield any medicinal virtue by which the constitution will be preserved free from decay. Its reference is to the life of the soul, in its perpetual continuance. The term, the tree of life, is frequently introduced into holy writ. Wisdom is denominated "a tree of life," *i. e.*, it is ever and continuously fruitful ; it preserves man in spiritual life. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life," *i. e.*, all that issues from a righteous man promotes life in others. "When the desire cometh, it is a tree of life"—it promotes health and vigor. In the visions of Ezekiel, and of St. John, the tree of life is placed in a conspicuous position. The tree of life to Adam, in his state of innocence, which was a visible, tangible object, may be regarded as a sign, seal, or sacrament of the covenant subsisting between himself and God. So Christ is a tree of life, for he is the pledge and seal of life to all believers. The promise in the text may symbolize,

#### 1st. Spiritual life.

The Ephesians had many vestiges of outward piety ; but they had lost their spiritual life. Our Divine Saviour promised them, if they would discover their sinful state ; repent of their folly in having fallen into it, and bemoan their present condition, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ; they should be restored to spiritual life through the merits of his death. He would give them the tree of life : inward, spiritual life, through himself.

We have to overcome all temptations to slothful-

ness, listlessness, and self indulgence, and Christ will still be to us our spiritual life: he will constantly be our life. And if we have declined, we must take the steps recommended to this people, in order to be restored to spiritual life. Let us aim at realizing the same experience St. Paul enjoyed, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.)

2nd. Eternal life.

Eternal life is the gift of God, and it is bestowed through Christ. It implies,

1st. Immortality.

The tree of life in the earthly paradise was noticed, as being in some way connected with immortality. Precautionary measures were adopted lest Adam after the fall should take of the tree of life and live forever. It does not belong to the scope of the present subject to inquire into the nature of this fact; but only to notice it as a fact. Adam was no longer under that covenant, by obedience to which immortality was to be secured to him. By a breach of the terms of the covenant, he was doomed to death; and he must not, therefore, partake of the pledge of immortality. We are rendered immortal through Christ. "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." There is no natural immortality of the human soul, any more than of the human body: and therefore all reasonings and deductions to establish such a dogma are vain. God alone has immortality dwelling in himself. He that creates can destroy.

He holdeth our souls in life. And it is his purpose that it shall be so—that man shall live forever. Hence, says Christ, respecting his sheep, “I give unto them eternal life.”

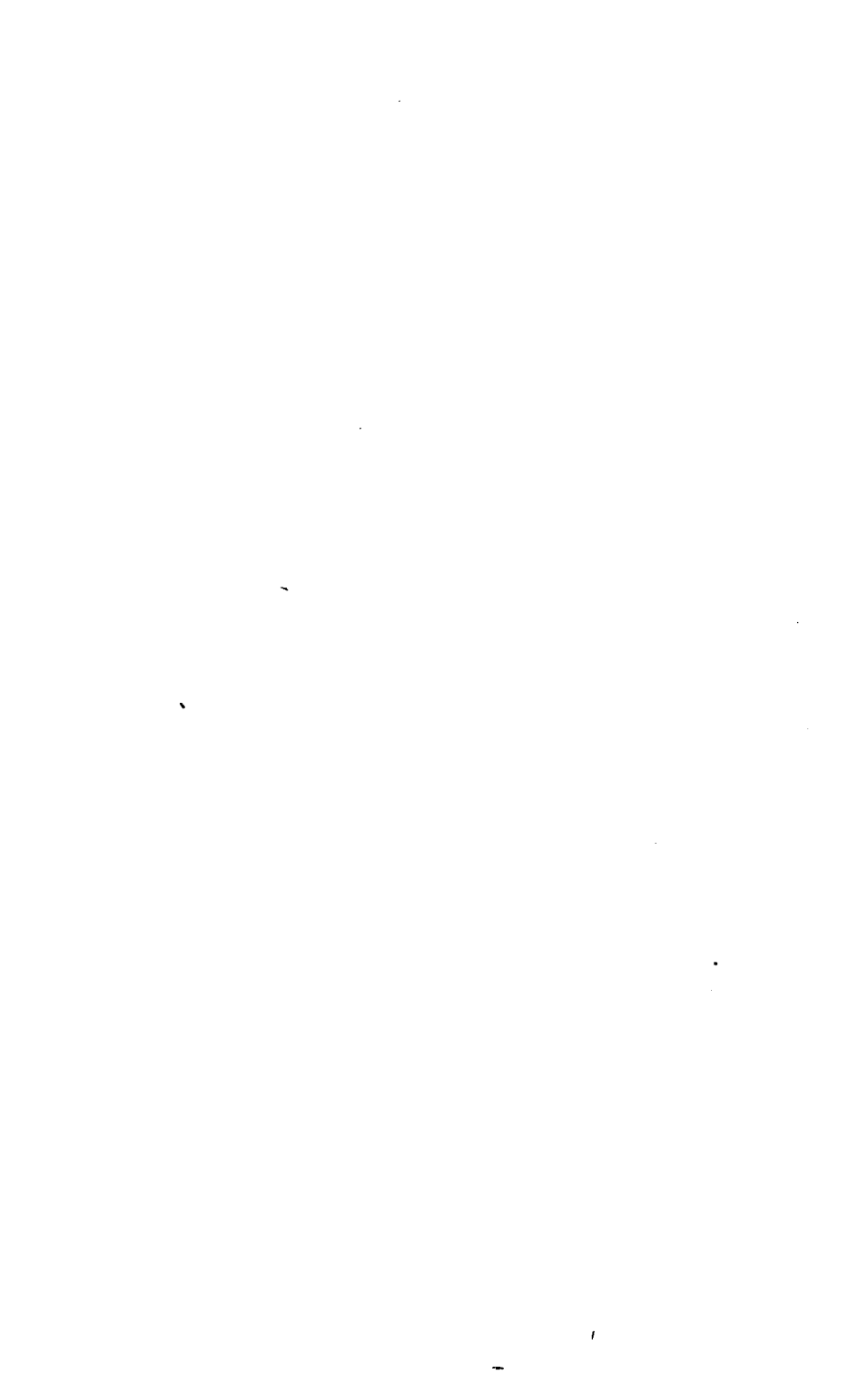
## 2. Eternal happiness.

Existence without enjoyment is but a living death. But the glorified saints shall eat of the fruit from the tree of life. Eternal blessedness issues from Christ. Bliss in heaven could not be sustained without him. It will be directly communicated from the throne of God, and realized in every circumstance of their happy existence; in the place, in the society, and in their employments.

The promise is, if they would overcome difficulties, sloth, and sin, and partake of spiritual life, they should be hopeful candidates of eternal life with all its vast circle of enjoyments.

Let us, then, be stimulated to live to God, and for eternal happiness. Let us seek for glory, honour immortality, that the result may be eternal life.





### DISCOURSE III.—THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA.

COMMENDED FOR FAITHFULNESS—INSPIRITED WITH COURAGE—AND  
CONSOLED BY PROMISES.

REV. II. 8-11 "*And unto the Angel of the Church in Smyrna write ; These things saith the First and the Last, which was dead and is alive ; I know thy works, 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 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 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.*

THERE are greater peculiarities in cities than those which are comprehended in their architectural magnificence ; or in their flourishing commerce and manufactories. The moral and intellectual character of the inhabitants constitute the most important considerations. There is no fear of God in some places ; and there Satan has a throne, and a synagogue, and there are altars erected to unknown gods. Other places are pervaded by the holy principles and precepts of true religion. These circumstances cast a shade, or a light on the places themselves, and have an influence on their future existence, which are seldom noticed by the virtuoso, or the antiquary.

Smyrna is a city of what was anciently denominated Ionia, and is situated near the bottom of the gulf of Smyrna in the Ægean sea, 320 stadia, or 45

miles N. of Ephesus. It was a celebrated commercial city, and very ancient; but was destroyed by a Lydian king. Four hundred years afterwards, in the time of Alexander the Great, or of Antigonus, it was rebuilt, on a spot about three miles distant from its ancient site. In the time of the Roman Emperors it was one of the finest cities of Asia. It was, however, destroyed by an earthquake, A.D. 177; but was rebuilt by Marcus Aurelius, with more than its former splendour. It has since suffered greatly from earthquakes and conflagrations. Yet, from its situation as an emporium of the Levantine trade, it holds its relative rank among the cities of that portion of Asia. It is well built, and its population is now computed at 130,000. It is rather on the increase, than in a state of decline.

Christianity was probably established in this city either by St. Paul or by Timothy. Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, resided here, and suffered martyrdom about the year 166; or 70 years after this epistle was sent. He was, by some writers, supposed to have been the Angel of the Church addressed on this occasion. Other authors say that the person here addressed, under that character, suffered martyrdom 50 years before St. Polycarp; or, in other words, that the person last referred to was the Pastor of this church 20 years after this period. It is, therefore, probable that Polycarp was not the Angel of this Church when this vision was seen. Polycarp stated to the Roman Judge that he had served Christ 86 years. This was in A.D. 166. It thus appears that this distinguished martyr embraced

Christianity A.D. 80, or 16 years prior to the penning of these epistles.

At present the Greeks have a bishop and two churches; and, besides the members of that persuasion, there are great numbers of Christians of all nations and sects. The Latin church has a monastery. The Americans have one church. The English have a Chapel in the Consul's house. It appears, by these statements, that the Christians are more in number, and better in condition than in any of the other Apocalyptic churches. This is a striking instance of the intervention of the Divine Being, as in this church there was much of which to approve, and nothing to censure.

It *might be* a matter of *curiosity* to enquire how certain persons *would* act if placed in peculiarly trying circumstances. But it is a matter of deep *interest*, and calculated to furnish important instruction, to contemplate those who *have* acted with fidelity in such circumstances. With similarity in the cases; with the same kind and degree of encouragements and motives, which ought to produce uniformity of action, men pursue widely different courses. When trials press, some shrink through weakness, and are regarded with contempt: but, when in a similar condition, others manifest moral heroism; they are regarded as possessed of moral dignity.

It is the case, that unfaithfulness awfully mars even that which is good in a man's character. There was more good said, even of Ephesus, than of Smyrna; but the good of Smyrna was unmixed. Hence the Ephesians are exhorted to repent, while

the Smyrnians are warmly commended ; are stimulated to courage, and consoled with promises. The Smyrnians are not commended for faith, or for works ; but for what must imply both, for endurance.

We shall further notice,

I. THE TITLE CHRIST SELECTS BY WHICH HE INTRODUCES HIMSELF TO THIS CHURCH.

This title is taken from the introductory scene, recorded in chap. i. ver. 18. He is the First and the Last—was dead and is alive again. We cannot avoid observing that this title is suited to the condition in which they were at the time the address was delivered. They were in a state of deep tribulation, and were threatened with yet greater sufferings. These afflictions were depressing and disheartening: enough to try their constancy, and their principles. But here is the antidote.

1st. He reminds them of his eternity, and consequently of his Godhead.

He has all power in heaven and in earth ; and whatever his church, and her suffering members need, he can do and bestow upon them. He who is the Head of the Church, and who falls under your observation as a human being, is also the eternal, ever-blessed Being ; and, therefore, is not only disposed to help you, but has power to accomplish it. He has not only made provision by the shedding of his blood as a human being ; but has power to apply it as the Divine Being : and he ever liveth to make intercession for us. You may be called upon to suffer, but Christ is still upon the throne either to check your enemies, or to give you strength in your extre-

mity. The contemplation of this character of our Lord could not fail to afford consolation to his suffering people at Smyrna; and must yield the same comfort in every similar case.

2nd. He reminds them of the constant efficacy of his own atoning sacrifice—"Dead, and alive again."

He died. This is a glorious fact. Not I am alive: but I was dead, and am alive. Still I am alive. I died, and made atonement; I live and ever dispense the blessings of that atonement. By his continued life he gives proof of the full satisfaction rendered to God by his atoning sacrifice. The Holy Spirit, says Christ, shall convince of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye see me no more. That is, the Holy Spirit shall demonstrate that my meritorious offering is sufficient to justify, because I go to the Father to present to him the memorial of it. And, he adds here, I still live; I am no more doomed to death; the sacrifice is complete; there is now pre-eminently a sphere for the Holy Spirit's work; and, therefore, ye see me no more. If my sacrifice had not been complete, I should not have been received of the Father, and should not have been invested with the mediatorial office; but should have been sent back again to the world to render complete that which was deficient. From hence the sinner is made righteous, and receives spiritual life. This consideration was calculated to encourage a harassed, suffering people. Their enemies might kill the body; they cannot abstract from the soul its life and salvation. Consider,

## II. THE COMMENDATORY ADDRESS.

The commendation is unmixed, there is no censure. It is not often the case that we can notice any church whatever without some reason for censure. Something will strike us we could wish did not exist; there will arise a desire to discover some qualities and excellencies we do not find. But, in this case, he that judges righteous judgment notices nothing for which he condemns them. This circumstance must occasion a feeling of high admiration for this faithful people.

Our Lord Jesus Christ testifies of his perfect cognizance,

1st. Of their *works*.

1. They were a *holy* church. Evidently they were in a higher state of purity than is common to churches, ancient or modern. They let their light so shine that others might glorify their heavenly Father. This was highly important, living, as they did, in the midst of an idolatrous and wicked population.

2. They were a *working* church. They did much in the cause of Christ. They worked in the midst of tribulation and persecution. Imprisonment, fire and sword, could not stop them from doing good. If a church is not a working church, it does not answer the design of its establishment.

2nd. Of their *tribulations*.

The tribulations alluded to, are to be considered as those they then endured; before, and irrespective of those which were predicted as still to befall them.

We are, in our flesh, heirs to affliction. But, situated as those Christians were, they undoubtedly had many not common to ordinary times. Their character was blackened, calumniated, and rendered odious by the libels of the heathen priests. They were subject to imprisonments and martyrdom.

There is a necessity—a “needs be” that the faithful should experience tribulation. A probationary existence implies gradual improvement; and very often painful trials are necessary to promote it. But none of our tribulations fall upon us casually, or fortuitously. Christ is cognizant of them all, and will not allow them to be excessive, or more than we are able to bear; and will afford us his sympathy under them. Each of these considerations are calculated to confer consolation upon the suffering disciple. He distinctly recognizes that he is only enduring a necessary evil: that it is intended to promote his perfection; that he suffers under the eye, and with the sympathy of his Divine Redeemer. All this causes the sufferer fully to acquiesce with all He appoints. Such should be the case when associated numbers are concerned, because tribulations are as necessary for churches as for individuals.

3rd. Of their *poverty*.

Perhaps it is not destitution, absolutely understood, that is here meant, but the absence of every thing in the nature of affluence. It is strange that their poverty should be a matter of commendation. Christ does not desire to see his people rich, else he could easily bestow riches upon them. They are poor—and he approved of it. It is of man's own



will to be rich. "They that will be rich," says the Apostle. Our blessed Redeemer took care to show us the danger of riches in his parable of the sower, and elsewhere. He does not merely praise them for bearing poverty patiently but for the fact of being poor. This shows there was something voluntary in it: something which marked a rigid adherence to principle.

1. By persecutions and exactions they were made poor. Probably they were often stripped of their property; and they would rather endure this than swerve from the truth, and their profession of it. Christ saw with approbation their faithfulness.

2. True Christianity often keeps a person poor.

A true Christian cannot resort to those schemes and methods of growing rich which the mere man of the world adopts. He cannot trade as some do. I am afraid there is a great deal of iniquity in trade. God looks into the store, and into the warehouse, into the day book, and into the ledger, and sees all your plans of doing business. Rather than become rich by nefarious means, the upright man is willing to remain poor. God does generally bless honest and upright endeavors, and frustrates the sinister plans of the unscrupulous; yet the case we have stated is often verified in the experience of God's people.

There is another cause of comparative poverty—the good man cannot withhold his substance from God's cause, nor from the relief of distressed brethren. God sees whether, in this respect, we are lawfully rich or not. A great part of the substance of some belongs to the poor, and to the cause of God; and

the time will come when he will ask, "How much owest thou to thy Lord? of how much hast thou robbed God?" Ah! how will some sanctimonious worshippers of mammon bear this awful scrutiny! These worthy professors in Smyrna would rather make themselves poor than that God's cause should be impeded by their illiberality. God grant that the Spirit's voice, heard in this commendation, may be received with cheerfulness, and their example of self-denial be willingly imitated.

4th. Of their *riches*.

Our Lord immediately adds, "but thou art rich." He must, therefore, use the word rich in another sense, than that in which the former characteristic was predicated of them. The radical meaning of the term is exuberance; and although they had no exuberance of gold and silver, yet they had endowments more precious than either. A Christian is rich in faith. These men of God had, it appears, attained the gracious power to grasp the promises of God and the fulness of Christ; and hence they were rich in grace, participating largely in the "unsearchable riches of Christ." A man of exuberant faith is rich in Christian graces, and abounds in the fruits of the spirit. He is rich in hope: his prospects of future blessedness are bright and blooming. He is one of those who shall inherit all things—a joint heir with Christ. There are many distinctive appellations of men. To say of a man that he is a rich man, or a poor man, is to make very important distinctions. But the former is an appellation which is justly applicable to a real Christian: even although

he is poor, yet he is rich, "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

5th. Lastly, Christ testifies of the blasphemous, false assumptions of pretended Jews; and how they were resisted by the Smyrnian Church. The trials of the primitive Christians from the Jews were always great. They first vilified them for forsaking Moses and the law. They next endeavoured to corrupt them to Judaism: and, when unsuccessful, did all they could to oppress and destroy them.

The resistance of the Sardians is here spoken of as a commendation of their character, and seems to imply more than a faithful adherance to the doctrines of the Gospel. The pretences of these Jews might possibly bring them into collision with the civil authorities. The Jews were wicked and compromising with respect to the usages and practices of the idolatrous Pagans around them; yet, they professed to be the true people of God. The Christians, on being required to do likewise, might feel themselves called upon to show the fallacy of this profession, and expose its wickedness, and perhaps specify how far it was contrary to God's requirements, as shown in their own sacred books. This would further bring upon the faithful, the hatred and oppositions of their adversaries, but they were testifying for God, and gained his approval, "ye are my witnesses that I am God." Notwithstanding the example of the Jews and their shameful pretensions to religious eminence, the Christians in Smyrna stood firm against idolatry and Judaism, and thus set an example of noble minded fidelity.

In this Epistle to the Christians of Smyrna, we have,

III. A REVELATION OF THEIR SUBSEQUENT CONDITION.

Trials and tribulations still awaited them. Some of you shall be "cast into prison that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days."

We notice,

1st. Their incarceration in prison.

They were to be torn from their homes, deprived of their liberty, subjected to loathsome dungeons, and to the rough, and impious barbarity of prison officials. Their churches were leveled to the ground; the property of the members was confiscated; the punishment of death was awarded to persons frequenting secret assemblies, that is, to persons congregating for the worship of God, and for refusing to give up their sacred books. The prisons were filled with bishops, and other ministers and leading members of the churches; species of torture often horrible were practised upon them. Indeed their tribulations and sufferings upon their arrest and imprisonment were of a fearful character. The text suggests that the Devil was the author of this persecution. We may say the same of many things in which he does not immediately appear, yet he is the author. The Jews might have some hand in this calamity; and it was brought about by the intervention of Galenus; but it is here traced back to its origin, reminding us of the words of St. Peter, in his first Epistle, "your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Many professing Christians yielded to their persecutors, renounced their faith, and burnt incense to the idols: but the Smyrnian Christians were generally faithful, and suffered death rather than apostatize from the faith of Christ.

2nd. The period of its continuance.

The imprisonment was to be protracted "ten days." Some understand this expression as implying *frequency* or *abundance*, as it does in several texts of Scripture, but it is most probable that a day is to be taken for a year; as is the case with many other numbers in this book, and in many other parts of the prophetic Scriptures. Consequently this denotes ten years of persecution. The persecution referred to is thought to have been that under the emperor Diocletian which began A. D. 302, and ended with Constantine's victory over Licinus and Maximen. This best answers to the prediction. None of the other persecutions lasted so long a time. The Smyrnians had then foreshown by their Lord ten long years of bitter persecution. They were forewarned, by an unerring voice, but it was also the voice of sympathising love, for, says Jesus, "fear none of those things," for I will bestow upon you a reward which will prove an ample compensation.

Let us consider,

IV. THE CONSOLATIONS AFFORDED. "Fear none of these things," &c.

Why should they not fear when such appalling troubles awaited them? Because Christ had an antidote. They were--

1st. To bear in mind the character by which he had announced himself.

We have already remarked that this character was suited to the state of tribulation in which they actually were, and which they would still be called to experience. Christ says, "I am your everlasting friend, your almighty, loving, all-atoning Saviour. I could preserve you from the evil if it were best it should be so, and I can sanctify it to you if I allow it to befall you." He promises,

2nd. That those who courageously overcome shall not be hurt of the second death.

The second death is to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Those who faithfully withstand the wiles of persecution, and overcome all its terrors, shall not come under its powers. It shall not touch them. "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." St. Paul looked bonds and afflictions steadily in the face, and exclaimed, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy."—"I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."—"I am ready to be offered up."

The Saviour does not promise them security from premature temporal death. That death you may suffer, but the second death shall not hurt you. "They that lose their lives for my sake shall find life." The fearful, who, yielding to this passion, do not overcome, have a portion in the lake of fire, (xxi. 8.) But the faithful shall rest in security and peace. The Saviour declared—

3rd. After faithfully enduring, they should be rewarded with a crown of life.

A crown implies *honour* and *authority*. These a Christian, especially a martyr, will enjoy in heaven.

He will be crowned with *life*.

The fulfilment of this promise embraces various particulars. The martyrs were to enjoy a resurrection of body 1000 years before the rest of the pious dead, as we shall subsequently show more at large. This was equivalent to saying, submit to lay down your life from 1 to 50 years before the course of nature, or the operations of disease would produce death, and I will reward you with 1000 years of life to the body more than is bestowed upon the rest of the blessed dead. The happiness of a state of union between the body and the soul is greater than that of the separate state of existence in bliss. This verifies our Lord's promise mentioned above: "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." An eternity of happy existence in common with all the pious is promised.---Life is power of action---it is capability of enjoyment---it is an acuteness of susceptibility in such particulars as will heighten the sense of bliss. This life is to be the insignia of honor---the crown of life. This is the animating motive (Heb. xii. 2,) to courageous perseverance.

4th. The gift of the crown was dependent on fidelity and victory. "Be thou faithful." "He that overcometh."

1. The term faithful sometimes signifies *believing*; as our Lord said to Thomas, "Be not faithless, but believe." Exercise lively, active confidence, in all

God says. This is the foundation of all that is valuable in the Christian life.

2nd. But it often signifies *a firm adherence to duty*, and a *constant discharge of it*.

Notwithstanding the fiery trials you do and will endure, yet faithfully profess attachment to me, and to my cause, and faithfully perform the duties which your profession requires. "Unto death," as long as life lasts; keep up a resistance, not occasionally or fitfully, but steadily and as long as you live.—Rather die than deviate: resist unto blood,—striving against sin and temptation.

Although we are not placed in similar circumstances to these faithful followers of the lamb, yet we have difficulties to overcome, and we owe duties of allegiance to our Divine Saviour. "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promise."

Unless we overcome all opposition, and are faithful unto death, we cannot be crowned. Let us put on the whole armour of righteousness, and bravely meet every foe.





## DISCOURSE IV.—THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS.

COMMENDED FOR THINGS APPROVABLE—REPROVED FOR THINGS  
REPREHENSIBLE—ADVISED AND DIRECTED IN A PATH OF SECURITY  
—AND ENCOURAGED BY AN ASSURANCE OF FUTURE GOOD TO  
THOSE WHO WILL BE FAITHFUL AND PERSEVERING.

REV. II. 12-17.—“*And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write ; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges ; I know thy works, and 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 a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. 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 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.*”

PERGAMOS, now called Bergamo, was the ancient metropolis of Mysia. It is situated on the right bank of the river Caicus, about 60 miles N. of Smyrna, and about 20 miles from the sea. About 200 years before Christ it became the capital of the Attalean kings, who established an extensive and flourishing kingdom in that region, which continued 150 years under the successive sway of six monarchs. The last of those kings bequeathed

his dominions to the Romans, who constituted the city of Pergamos the capital of a Province formed of the territory of the former kingdom, and termed the Province of Asia Propria. Under the Attalean kings it was the seat of literature and of the arts. The number of volumes in the library is said to have amounted to 200,000, which Antony transferred to Alexandria. Parchment for writings was first invented and made use of at this place. It is still an important place, and presents vestiges of its former magnificence, in the remains of works of art. At present it contains about 15,000 persons. It has nine or ten mosques, two churches, and one synagogue; but the professors of Christianity are poor and wretched, and few in number.

In St. John's time, it was a city as noted for wickedness as for splendour. Satan's seat was there. It was especially celebrated for Esculapian idolatry. The serpent was the principal symbol of worship. Satan reigned with almost uncontrolled sway, and therefore it was a highly dangerous situation in which to live.

Christianity was established in this place, probably in some of the travels of St. Paul, or by Timothy, or by some one sent by them to proclaim the truth. St. Paul's tours were extensive. He gives an account of one of them, "from Jerusalem, round about to Illyricum." He appears to have gone round to every important place.

The descriptive title by which Christ introduces himself to this church is, He that hath the sharp sword with two edges. This was mentioned in the

portraiture of our Lord in chap. i. 16, and before the close of the Revelations, just after the judgment of great whore, the heavens opened, and St. John saw a vision of Jesus Christ. In this place, it is said, that "out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations." Afterwards there is mentioned a great slaughter. Isaiah predicts that he should smite the nations with the rod of his mouth, and slay the wicked with the breath of his lips. St. Paul, speaking in the same strain, says, "that wicked shall the Lord consume with the Spirit (or breath) of his mouth." (2 Thess. ii. 8.) This answers to the Apostle's description of the word of God, which he says is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. iv. 12.) All these descriptions portray a keen spiritual operation, such as that of the word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit. This is more particularly distinguished by describing the sword as coming out of his mouth, and not as held in his hand. By this sword he smites to produce conviction. It dissects the mind, effecting an entire anatomy of the heart; those who will not be convinced, will he smite to their destruction: for this sword slays the ungodly by denouncing the punishment due to their sin.

The state of a portion of this church shows how appropriate was the title Christ used in his address to it. Some of them, at least, had admitted serious errors. They needed sharp and severe measures.

What is more calculated to convince of error than the clear and forcible exhibition of God's truth.

In further treating the subject, we may notice a few prominent points—we have,

I. COMMENDATION FOR APPROVABLE THINGS.

The Lord Jesus Christ is perfectly acquainted with the works of every church, whether good or bad. Doubtless many in this church practised works which were well pleasing to their Divine Master: yet he does not specially notice any. The reason of this, perhaps, is, that he was intent upon calling their attention to other things which were of special and absorbing interest at that time. One of these things was highly commendable, viz.,

Firm adherence to the religion of Christ, even at eminent peril.

For steadily professing to be a Christian, Antipas was martyred there. Perhaps the like fate befel many others, and Antipas is probably noticed as being the most eminent among them. In Pergamos, wickedness prevailed—Satan's throne was erected in the place—persecution raged and death threatened. Yet they held fast: they firmly grasped the promises, and maintained their Christian profession. Surely this is no small commendation. It is an important thing to do this. The Apostle, contemplating the troubles of The Hebrew Christians, exhorts them closely and powerfully to be faithful in such circumstances. These eminent persons will appear much more worthy of praise if we consider,

1. Some surrender profession for a little temporal advantage.

To get a good name, or a smile from the rich and the great; to obtain respectable connections, and associates; to secure a good situation, and other considerations of a similar import, there are thousands in the world who will renounce their connection with the people of God. Religion is often influenced by social and political matters. Some persons are always for the religion of the high and the noble. When the kings of Israel were either for idolatry, or for Jehovah, the major part of the people was with them, demonstrating how little principle there often exists in the profession of religion.

2nd. Some renounce their profession on account of a little persecution or opposition.

Multitudes who would be willing to be connected with the people of God in other circumstances, will stand aloof when there is a little opposition. Our Saviour had his eye upon persons of this description, for he delineates a certain class of superficial hearers, and says they have no root, and in time of temptation, trial and persecution, they fall away. They would take up religion from a slight impression, if things were favorable; and they would let it go if but a little inconvenience were the result of their association with it. A time of trial is a test, and men then show their principles.

3rd. Others turn aside because of slight offences.

Matters of offence often occur: those who give occasion for them are deeply guilty, and have a severe woe pronounced against them: nevertheless, those who abandon their profession of religion on

the account of them, give a glaring proof of their want of firm principle.

Considering all these things, it was no small praise which the Saviour bestowed upon these faithful people, when he said, "I know thou dwellest where Satan's seat is, and yet thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in the days of martyrdom." They had no prospect of gaining any thing of a temporal nature by their religion, but there was danger of losing even life itself. Surely such persons must love Christ and his cause. Hence this commendation is highly appropriate. Our blessed Redeemer loves to behold men faithful even to death. He looks with contempt on those who flinch and vacillate. A person came to him and said, I have a desire to enter into eternal life ; what shall I do to secure it. It is an important object, implies the Saviour, but wilt thou pay the price for it ; sell all that thou hast, and distribute the proceeds to the needy. He went away very sorrowful, for he was very rich. A certain scribe said, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest : But Jesus said, the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. It is presumed the Saviour of the world had not quarters good enough for this seemingly zealous man, for we do not find him following him. Others said, let us but accommodate a few matters to our minds, and then we will follow thee. But Jesus admitted of no compromises. There have been, and still there are, but few who manifest the firm decision of these

faithful Pergameans. There is but little chance that persons would stand the test of martyrdom, who barter religion for favour; and who make it subservient to incidental matters.

And yet the members of this church, who were so firmly consistent, were censurable in other matters, a plain proof that it is a great thing to have the whole mind of Christ. In this Epistle we have,

## II. REPROOF FOR THINGS REPREHENSIBLE.

There were doctrines and practices at variance with Christianity—idolatry and fornication. These things were not chargeable upon the whole body; but upon some part of it. And the Pastors and faithful among them are charged with laxity respecting them. They might have done more to have banished error and strange doctrine; and to have restrained licentious conduct.

There are two leading errors charged against this people,

### 1st. The doctrines of Balaam.

It is asserted there were those among them that taught the doctrines of Balaam; and that he taught Balak to cast stumbling blocks before the children of Israel; and these stumbling blocks are enumerated in two particulars, viz., to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.

From the narrative of the Old Testament Scriptures, we are acquainted with the history and practices of Balaam. He appears to have been a person possessed of a knowledge of the remnants of Patriarchal tradition, and to have been eminent in the parts in which he lived for instructing the



people, and it appears did deliver prophetic predictions. His name had reached to places far beyond his own immediate neighborhood. He was sent for by Balak the king of Moab to curse Israel. It seems he was frequently employed by princes and others to pronounce blessings and curses upon individuals, and upon collective bodies; and that he did this under the direction of Jehovah. At the time he was sent for by Balak he had so much regard for Jehovah and his truth that he would not open his mouth to utter one curse against them, although he was anxious to do so to please his employer, and to receive his rewards. Yet, afterward, he so far yielded to his selfish nature; the prospect of riches and honor so effectually subdued his better convictions, that he offered the most notorious and wicked advice to Balak. The following appear to have been his reasonings, and the advice which he tendered. This people have God's approbation, and as long as they retain it you cannot injure them. Draw them into a course of practice, by which they will offend God, and then their protection will depart them. First endeavour to establish an intercourse between the two nations; then they will form friendships. Such friendship being established, and familiar intercourse arising from it, let your daughters use all their art to entangle their sons. After they have been drawn into illicit intercourse, they will easily be led into idolatry. This advice was but too faithfully followed, and the anticipated effects followed. The anger of the Lord was kindled, and the plague carried off vast numbers of the people.

The doctrine of Balaam, which was taught at Pergamos, and at other places, was that which admitted the lawfulness of friendship with the world, and the adoption of its manners: also that it was not sinful to comply with invitations to an attendance on heathen idolatry. In connexion with this it was easy to slide into the practice of that fornication so generally followed by idolators; and it seems that these false teachers even vindicated this sin.

Satan can make very little impression in attacking the truth of Christianity; but he can make its professors worldly-minded; and he can induce them to follow the practices of worldly people, and even to compromise their Christianity by so doing. And, after this, it will not be long before he will succeed in inducing such deluded persons to commit the most awful sins. The worldly spirit is the great antagonist of pure, vital, and earnest Christianity in all ages, and in all places.

2nd. The doctrines of the Nicolaitanes.

From all we can learn, these doctrines were very similar, at least in many of their features to the former; yet they must have had some distinction or they would not have been separately noticed in addition to them. Our Lord would not wish to degrade any people by an accumulation of unmeaning charges. Perhaps the Nicolaitanes may have been known as the prominent and bold defenders of those doctrines, and as zealously endeavouring to establish the principles on which those practices were founded. They are said to have been the followers of Nicholas, one of the seven Deacons, from whom they

appear to have derived their name. They are thought, by some, to have been a sect of Gnostics. The writers of the 2nd century affirm that they adopted their sentiments respecting two principles of all things, the *Æons*, and the origin of the world. But these writers appear to have confounded this people with a sect founded by one *Nicolaus* in the 2nd century. It is to be remarked, the Saviour does not reproach them with erroneous opinions concerning the Deity, which, in fact, were held by the Gnostics, but with licentiousness of practice, and with doctrines which lead to such practice. Their erratic practice seems to have gone especially counter to that law which the Apostles saw necessary to enact. (Acts. xv. 29.) This was against fornication, and things offered in sacrifice to idols. *Irenæus* says, that the *Nicolaitanes* held fornication, and the eating of idol sacrifices to be things indifferent, and, therefore, permitted to Christians. Their practice was opposed to the whole spirit and tenor of the the Gospel, and to the special declaration of the Apostolic decree.

What a strange thing that the devil, through the medium of wicked men, should be able so soon, in such a miserable manner, to corrupt the pure doctrine of the gospel! And how strange that a man, who was once of such good report as *Nicholas* must have been, should be the principal author of this notorious doctrine! This fact powerfully enforces the Apostolic warning, "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall."

In this Epistle we notice—

### III. ADVICE AND DIRECTION IN A PATH OF SECURITY.

The advice tendered is to "repent." Respecting his duty, it is proper to observe—

1st. To commit a wicked act after justification is making work for repentance. No man remains in God's favour because he was once in his favour. If he fall into sin, he forfeits the Divine approbation, and he must repent to regain it. How many make work for repentance by their unwatchfulness.

2nd. Be careful that you do not permit dead works, with their pernicious influence, to remain upon the conscience; but, if unhappily you have contracted fresh guilt, betake yourself immediately to repentance. Rest not until you are restored to your former state and obtain a sense of sin forgiven.

3rd. Be impressed with the fact, that destructive consequences follow a neglect of repentance.

Jesus distinctly declares, "I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." He will speedily declare those judgments which will inevitably fall upon the impenitent. The word of grace which proceeds out of the mouth of the Son of Man will be changed to the two-edged sword of condemnation, issuing from the Redeemer's mouth, to execute vengeance on the unfaithful. He will come quickly. He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall be suddenly, and without remedy, destroyed.

In this Epistle there is—

### IV. ASSURANCE OF SUITABLE GOOD TO THE FAITHFUL AND PERSEVERING.

It will be readily perceived that all the terms

employed in this address are highly figurative, and are indicative of spiritual and gospel blessings.— They must be interpreted according to their obvious allusions. These promises contain—

1st. Assurances of Divine support—the hidden manna.

Here our attention is directed to the golden pot of manna, preserved in the ark. There was a Jewish tradition, that the ark of the covenant, tables for shew-bread, and pot of manna, had been hid by Josiah, in a time of public calamity, and were lost, but that they would be restored in the days of the Messiah. Hence, it is thought, the term, the hidden manna. This is here promised, although not in a literal, but in a spiritual sense. Jesus, and this salvation, is all this spiritually. In our Saviour's celebrated discourse to the Jews, he styles himself the bread of life which came down from heaven. The blessings of salvation are frequently compared to a feast. The Lord feeds his people with delicious and sustaining food—with bread from heaven. Believers may say, I have bread to eat of which you know nothing. They have spiritual support and nourishment, by which they are strengthened to endure trials, temptations and toils.

2nd. A declaration of acquittance from guilt—the white stone.

There is no tradition, or object of a ritual nature, which answers to this allusion. It is most probable that it refers to the practice of Ostracism, such as was in use especially among the Grecians, and, perhaps, in the very city of Pergamos itself. When

any one wished to condemn an individual who was feared or hated, but who could not, by a regular trial be convicted of any crime, the Ostracism was resorted to. Any one who wished his banishment, cast into an urn a black stone: those who wisheth his acquital, cast in a white stone. Here, says Jesus, I will give him the token of acquital. He gives to the believing soul the sense of pardon in this life, by the witness of his Holy Spirit: and he will give to the faithful and persevering, at the great judgment day a public declaration of acceptance before angels, men, and devils.

3rd. An intimation of honor to be conferred—a new name.

An acquitted person has often his name written on a white stone, as a certificate of his innocence, which was highly creditable to him; and sometimes some commendations were added. The conquerors at the Olympic, and other games, had sometimes a new name given to them. On exalting, or promoting a person to honor, or dignity, he had a new name conferred upon him. This was the case with Jacob, Joseph, Daniel, Paul, and many others. New names were often given from circumstances, especially when they were brilliant, or of great credit to the individual.

Christ promises to give a new name to the faithful, or in other words he promises to promote them to honor. Name in Scripture often signifies nature; and he bestows upon all real Christians a new nature, which constitutes a high distinction for them. Sometimes a name was added as a token of pecu-

liar honor. This was frequently done among the Romans. And, in the New Testament, several names are added to God's people. The highest of these is, The Sons of God.

The assurances of Christ to the Church in Pergamos.

4th. Implied privileges to be granted.

The white stone was a ticket, or a certificate, which, on being shown, admitted its possessor to great privileges ; among others, certain contributions towards his support. And the Christian who carries with him the evidence of his acceptance can introduce himself into the presence of God, can draw promised support from him, has the attendance of angels ; and claims his inheritance in heaven, of which he is constituted an heir.

As an application of these truths to ourselves, let us remember, that all this good is bestowed, not in consideration of our having been once in grace, but on our faithfully and finally overcoming every difficulty and temptation. Then persevere and labour toward this end : trample the world and sin underfoot ; and urge your way to heaven. " The God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

## DISCOURSE V.--THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA.

EXCELLENCIES RECOGNIZED--EVILS NOTICED--DISTINGUISHED FAVORS  
TO BE BESTOWED.

REV. II. 18-29.—“*And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write ; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet 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. 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 things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication ; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, 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 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 put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, 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 as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*

THYATIRA was a city in the Northern border of Lydia, 27 miles from Sardis, and 48 miles S. E. from Pergamos. It was known, in ancient times, as we are informed by Pliny, by the names of Polopia and Euhippa. It was a colony. Strabo says, a Macedo-



nian colony. There was a Roman road from Pergamos to Sardis, which passed through this place. It was noted for the art of dyeing, which was practised there. Lydia had emigrated from this city to Phillippi, for the purpose of introducing, or pursuing this trade there. It is still noted for this art, and carries on an extensive business in that line.

The modern name of this place is Akhessar, or the white castle, so called from the great quantity of white marble abounding there. It is not very imposing in its present appearance. It contains, however, a considerable number of inhabitants, differently estimated from 20,000 to 30,000 ; but they are principally Turks. There are 9 mosques, 1 Greek, and 1 Armenian church. The professed Christians know but little of Christianity.

It is very probable that the Gospel was introduced into this place by St. Paul, in his early itineraries. At the time of St. John's writing between 40 and 50 years had elapsed since St. Paul first visited these parts. There was a considerable Christian church established, which appears to have been matured by time.

The title which Christ assumes in addressing this church is again worthy of our attention, as it exhibits an appropriateness to their state and character.— This is the only place in this book where Jesus Christ uses the name of the “ Son of God ;” and, evidently, it was not without design. In the 2nd Psalm, ver. 7, it is said “ I will declare the decree : Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee.” The latter part of the Psalm agrees

with the promise made to this church in verses 26, 27, with this distinction that Jesus, the Son of God, here delegates to His church that power and authority which, in the Psalm, is given to him. He possesses power and authority, and bestows it upon them in the same capacity. They had not used the authority which Christ had bestowed upon them for the proper direction of the affairs of his church: he, therefore, reminds them of his penetrating judgment, and of the perfect equity of his proceedings. He informs the delinquents among them, that in justice he will punish them; and that he will duly discriminate, and amply bestow rewards of power and authority upon the faithful.

The address to this church affords us many hints which may be of great profit to us. Let us proceed to notice—

#### I. A RECOGNITION OF EXCELLENCIES.

This church differs much from the Ephesian church. The Ephesians had left their first love, but were zealous in doctrine and in discipline. The Thyatirans had faith and love; but were lax in discipline. Is this the natural tendency of love? Or, may we not possess the most ardent and intense affection, and yet have sufficient firmness of mind to maintain a sufficient self control? How beautiful when firmness and tenderness are blended together—

“Care full of love, and yet severe as hate.”

Strict discipline, therefore, does not imply a want of love; but laxity in discipline does imply a want of firmness. The encomiums bestowed upon this community are of a high character. The phrase,

“I know thy works,” denotes a discerning recognition of them, good or bad, as there is afterwards mention made of “service” which seems equivalent to works in its general adaptation, and work being added implies that God approved of their works; also of their moral conduct, distinguished from their labors. They are not reprovèd as persons fallen from the life and power of religion.

They were distinguished in four particulars.

1st. For love—*ten agapen*.

This is the only church of which love is particularly predicated, and for which its members are commended. As before observed, the Ephesians had left their first love. The other churches addressed are not noticed concerning this “more excellent” quality. We may, therefore, infer that the Christians in Thyatira were illustrious examples of an amiable charity. It is a rare case to see a community of persons eminent for this distinguishing excellence of the Christian character. It is selected by Christ, and specially mentioned to their honor. How prominently the injunction and commendation of this grace stands in the sacred records. Deficiency in love is the great bane of spiritual prosperity in the divine life. Love is the first fruit of the spirit, and is essential to true religion; justification by faith puts all men upon a level. The concomitant blessing of regeneration produces the feeling and exercise of love. Pride makes unlawful distinctions between men, and thus leads to all uncharitableness: grace makes all gracious persons brethren: as Christianity finds all men the same as sinners: so it makes all

true believers children of the same Father and possessors of a family affection. Love is without partiality, full of mercy and good fruits.

2nd. For faith.

The word used here is not *elpas*, signifying confidence, trust, or reliance; *ten pestin*, which signifies fidelity in holding fast what they had received. They did not decline, or draw back. Yea, they not only retained the grace at first received, but advanced in it, "the last was more than the first." In this feature of standard worth, the Thyatirans were pre-eminent. There are but few indeed who never lose anything they have received. Too many leave their first love, and after the lapse of a few years, but few churches or persons are what they were when they first embraced religion. But we have one instance, at least, the one recorded in the text. This fidelity was undoubtedly nourished by their firm belief of the truth and importance of the Gospel, and their habitual and constant dependance on its author, his provisions, and his promises.

3rd. For service.

The word employed is *diaconian*, which, in our version, answers to deacon: and the allusion is, therefore, to the service and work of a deacon, as practised in the primitive church. A deacon was one who was appointed to take charge of various affairs, especially those of a secular and pecuniary nature. The idea here is to perform any service for the good of others. It does not allude to the formal office, for the commendation applies generally. The office of a true believer is to be useful, in any and in every

possible way. All Christ's people are deacons—servants of his church.

The disposition for service springs from faith and love. When we love God we love his law ;—readily engage in obedience ; and delight in doing good to others. Those remarkable for love and faith, are remarkable for service. The term service, in the text, appropriately follows that of love, because love is the principle of action, and affords the strongest motive to engage in labor for the welfare of others. Every man should look on the things of others, and not on his own only.

“O that my Lord would count me meet  
To wash his dear disciples' feet.”

#### 4th. For patience.

The signification of the word is endurance, unswerving constancy under afflictions, persecutions, and trials. To endure long, repeated, and painful sufferings. Tribulation worketh patience ; it is the means by which it is exercised and acquired. Be not weary in well doing, or in patiently suffering the will of God. Let patience have its perfect work. The primitive Christians had much to bear, and they required much patience. Of them it might emphatically be said, “Ye have need of patience.” We shall all find sufficient exercise for this grace. “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus.”

In this Epistle we have :

#### II. AN AFFIRMATION OF THINGS DISAPPROVED.

The charge here preferred, does not affect the

majority of the people ; but only a portion who were deceived by false arts and pretences.

The things complained of, for the most part, were the teaching and conduct of a person named Jezebel, who is styled a prophetess. The name, we presume, is assumed ; but it was a real individual referred to, and not a class of teachers thus denominated.

It is evident there is an allusion to Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, king of Israel. It will be necessary to refer a little to the history of that individual. Jezebel was famous for the influence she acquired over her husband Ahab ; and for inducing him to become a worshipper of her idols, instead of Jehovah, the God of Israel. She seems to have been a woman of great parts, ingenuity, and intrigue. She endeavored, by all means in her power, to put down the Jewish religion. She succeeded so far, as that the whole mass of the Israelites, with the exception of 7000 men, bowed the knee to Baal. She infused into her daughter Athaliah, who was married to the king of Judah, a similar spirit, to such an extent that she acted the same part, and with a good degree of the same success, in Judah, as her mother had done in Israel. Her political genius enabled her to hold an ascendancy in Israel even after Ahab's death, and to direct and control her son Joram. † She manifested remarkable firmness of mind ; for even in a time of great emergency, without exhibiting any pusillanimous subserviency, she decked herself in her most splendid array to confront her adversary Jehu. She was evidently a person of great ability, whatsoever

may be said of the base and wicked purposes to which she devoted her eminent talents.

One sacred author refers to the writings of others, and selects a prominent character as a type, or representative, by which to designate some other prominent person. There is always something exactly similar in reputation and bearing between the two individuals thus compared. We have seen an instance already in these Epistles, in the selection of Balaam. Here Jezebel is selected as a model by which to portray some talented and influential woman in Thyatira, who was using all her powers of ingenuity, cunning and policy, to lead the professing Christians of that place into idolatry and wickedness. This was probably done in a covert and insinuating manner. It appears she pretended to the spirit of prophecy, in order the better to accomplish her purposes, or, otherwise, had, as some have supposed, a real communication with Satan.

It has been asserted that she was the wife of the Angel, or Pastor of the church. Many MSS. and versions read, "Thy wife Jezebel." If so, the sin of the Pastor, in allowing this, was great. A minister's wife may do much good, or much harm. The Pastor in question appears to have been a weak man, as Ahab most probably was, and, being easily led, was overcome by his wife. The devil frequently commits evil through the medium of the the weaker vessel. He dare not attack Adam, but approached Eve. To accomplish the corruption of Israel, the far-seeing Balaam recommended an intercourse between the Moabitish women and the men

of Israel, and succeeded but too well. A minister ought to be a man of firmness, swayed by neither wife, brother, sister, nor child. Hence, St. Paul says, he should be able to rule well his own house; else, he asks, how can he govern the church of God.

The doctrine taught by this female appears to have been the same as that of the Nicolaitanes, viz., that it was lawful to dissemble religious principles, and occasionally to conform to superstition and idolatry, for the purpose of avoiding persecution. This woman might have been one of this sect, and was, perhaps, personally alluded to because of her notoriety, and of her striking resemblance to the great mistress of the seducing art, by whose name she is signalized. The Gnostics called this doctrine the depths of God—the depths of Bythos. By those terms alleging that they contained the most profound secrets of Divine Wisdom. But mark! Jesus calls them the depths of Satan; inasmuch as they were masterpieces of subtlety and wickedness.

An opportunity was afforded Jezebel for repentance, a space was granted her to that end, motives were urged, and a warning was given, to make all effectual. Thus shines forth the goodness, and forbearance of God. But the opportunity was not improved. Punishment was consequently threatened. "I will cast her into a bed, and her paramours into great tribulation, and kill her children with death." No doubt a figure is employed; and that God intends to make it known, that, without repentance, there should be a similarity between the sin and the punishment. A mischievous adul-



teration of doctrine and morals leads to a complication of miseries terminating in death. This is often demonstrated by the dispensations of divine providence.

To what lengths in sin even professing Christians may go ; to what depths may they sink, when they lose a single eye to the glory of God as their guiding and actuating principle !

Upon those who did not become contaminated with the pernicious subtleties of Jezebel we notice :

### III. THE DISTINGUISHED FAVORS BESTOWED.

We may conclude, that it was only a small part of this church which fell into temptation. And to those who escape he says, " I will put upon you none other burden." I have no other charge to lay upon you : but exhort you still to persevere in the good and in the right way, and in the name of the Lord.

To the faithful is here promised,

1st Power over the nations.

This is a singular phrase : but the analogy of Scripture would not warrant us in interpreting it as signifying secular civil power and authority. The prophecies of Scripture predict a period when Christ's dominion shall be universal. Then the saints will have the honor of reigning with him. The kingdom he will establish will be of the same nature as that he has often, in other places, taught, viz., a spiritual kingdom. " Ye are they," says our Lord, " which have continued with me in my temptations ; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as he hath appointed unto me ; that ye may eat and drink at my table, and sit on thrones judging the twelve

tribes of Israel.” Now all this is easy to conceive without the idea of a personal reign on earth, with his throne at Jerusalem. For Christ has said, “my kingdom is not of this world, (*kosmos*) not of this order, arrangement, or constitution,—*i. e.*, not a secular kingdom, but consequently a spiritual one. As all the saints are equally to have this honor, it entirely obviates the idea of secular sway: for, if so, who are they to reign over: they would all be kings, and would have no subjects.

The phraseology employed in this passage plainly refers us to the 2nd Psalm. That Psalm speaks of the opposition which kings and Princes would make to Christ’s kingdom; which has been verified, by facts, a thousand times—of his victory over them, which has often already partially transpired—of his destruction of all these enemies, which is even now in process of fulfillment—and of the entire subjugation to himself of the whole mass, which engrosses, at the present time, the highest anticipations of a large portion of God’s people. He will undoubtedly possess the heathen, yea, the uttermost parts of the earth, for his inheritance. This portion of Scripture is applicable, first, to the early days of Christianity, and to the whole course of the Christian dispensation; and especially to the period of time at the close of it, when he will take the kingdom. Christians participate in these triumphs. Departed Saints will share in Christ’s conquests. They anticipate them now; but shall more especially share in them at the resurrection. In the midst of opposition the people of God recognize all power in the

hands of Christ; and are persuaded, that although now oppressed, it will not be so always. The words, then, seem to imply a spiritual ascendancy; a moral and religious influence and control, which shall be especially the lot of those who have been eminent, instrumentally, in the subjugation of the heathen to Christ.

2nd. The gift of the morning star.

Here the spontaneous question will be, what will this figure imply? The memory naturally reverts to several descriptions in holy Scripture, couched in figurative language, referring to the Saviour of the world, in which the leading idea seems to be the dissemination of light. He is called the Sun of righteousness—the Day-Spring from on high. The ancient prophecy of Balaam will present itself to the mind, “There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Seth.” (Num. xxiv. 17.) This signifies a ruler, and it is universally agreed that the Messiah was intended. In the 22nd chap. of Rev. ver. 16, our Lord evidently applies these words to himself. “I am the root and offspring of David—the ruler who may be primarily alluded to in Balaam’s prophecy—and consequently he adds, “and the bright and morning star.”

In effect, then, when our Lord promised to bestow upon them the Morning Star, he promised to give them himself; but to give himself in a special character; as the author of all religious life and the source of all divine light. As true believers they had been made “partakers of Christ.” And it would be an im-

portant sense of the promise, to learn that he should still be their all and in all; for if Christ is ours all things are ours, whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come.

But we believe he has something further in view in making this promise.

The morning star is the harbinger of day. It might have been said, "it is, in some painful sense, night with you. There is much darkness, ignorance, error, weeping, and sorrow. But the morning of light, truth and gladness shall arrive. I will give you, in and through myself, a glorious immortality: a soul and body united in which to see and be with the Lord, and to be supremely happy forever. Sorrow may continue for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Christ is the harbinger of day to the Christian when changing worlds—when passing through the dark valley and shadow of death, amid the sinkings of nature;—the awe of approaching the infinitely pure Being before whom he must stand; he feels a shrinking back: but Christ appears to cheer him: he manifests his love, and assures him of his favor. He is to him the harbinger of day—the assurance of blessed immortality. The fainting Christian then exclaims, "though I walk through the valley, and the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me;" and thus with joy he passes through death triumphantly home.

The sum of Christ's advice and promise to the church in Thyatira is this: be content to suffer a

little longer, and a glorious eternity shall be your reward, and you shall, in the eternal state, inherit all things through me.

Let us, then, be encouraged to seek the possession of all these excellencies ; and to avoid all the evils for which this and other churches are censured ; and let it be our especial aim to shine in every Christian grace, and to avoid every thing which would diminish our glory. Let us, by a patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality ; and thus secure eternal life.

## DISCOURSE VI.—THE CHURCH IN SARDIS.

THE IMPERFECT STATE OF THE GREATER PART OF ITS MEMBERS DESCRIBED—ADVICE SERIOUSLY URGED UPON THEM—CONSEQUENCES OF DISREGARDING THIS ADVICE.

REV. III. 1-3 :—“ *And unto the angel of the church in Sardis 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 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 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.*”

THE city of Sardis was the capital of Cræsus, and of the Lydian kings. It was situated at the foot of Mount Timolus, 33 miles South of Thyatira, and 40 East from Smyrna. It was an ancient, a great, and a glorious city. This is manifest by the vast extent and grandeur of its ruins. It was taken by Cyrus from Cræsus, and subsequently fell to the Romans. In the time of Tiberius it was destroyed by an earthquake, but was re-built by command of that emperor.

The name it at present bears, given by the Turks, is Sart, or Sard. It is now no more than an ignoble village, with low cottages of clay ; and the inhabitants are shepherds, or herdsmen ; who feed their flocks and herds on the neighboring plains. It contains one mosque, once a Christian Church. A short time ago, there were only seven Christians belonging

to the village, who were in miserable circumstances, without a church or minister. Now, there is one small church on the plains, where a few Christians, who used to meet in each other's houses, maintain a priest. Here, the few scattered Christians around, to the number of about forty, including the seven in the village of Sard, resort for worship. But, even this circumstance, has had an effect, in a social point of view ; for the neighborhood of the spot on which the little church is built, has risen into a little village now called Tartar—Reury.

The Sardinian church did probably profit by the rebukes of Christ, for it afterward seemed to manifest some vigour. About A.D. 177 it was under the government of a learned and eloquent bishop, named Melito, who composed the first catalogue of the books of the Old Testament, compiled by any Christian author ; as well as several other learned and useful works. A canon, passed by a council held in this city A.D. 347, is supposed to have mainly contributed to the dominant power of the Roman See.

In our Lord's address to this church, as in other places, he selects such titles as are particularly adapted to the state of the church. He introduces himself as "he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars." In the preliminary discourse we explained at large the circumstances here alluded to. The seven Spirits are the Holy Spirit—the seven stars the seven ministers of the churches : seven is the number of perfection. These are all under the direction and management of Christ ; and are sent together —ministers and Holy Spirit—to the churches.

A reference to various circumstances, with an examination of this announcement, will show its adaptation to the state of the church. It evidently appears that there was far too little dependence on the divine and spiritual influences of the Holy Ghost in this church. Their's was a nominal Christianity: they had a name to live, but in reality they were dead. The glorious Redeemer reminds them of the fulness of the spirit in opposition to formality; that although they were destitute of vitality, yet there was life to be derived from the Spirit's influence. Thus he impresses upon them that they were without excuse, and were lying under a bitter condemnation. All churches, as well as this particular one, need such a remembrance. There is a pressing necessity for a constant, fervent application to the Holy Spirit for vitality and power.

Perhaps, also, there might not have been among the professing Christians at Sardis, a proper estimation of the importance of the Christian ministry. This is but too easily overlooked. God works by instrumentalities; our Lord, therefore, reminds them that the stars were held in his hand, as well as the Holy Spirit, and that, by his own immediate appointment, Ministers were sent, with whom Christ continually associates himself. The Saviour is constantly present with those laboring in his vineyard, and they are continually under his direction and care. To have Christ fully set before us, through the instrumentality of the ministry of the word, is a blessing of no ordinary character. Oh! that we might value it, and improve by it as we ought.

But what does the soul-penetrating, heart-search-



ing eye of the Head of the church *observe* respecting the church at Sardis.—Let us notice,

I. THE GENERAL STATE OF THE SARDIAN CHURCH DESCRIBED.

They were not infidels, scoffers, apostates, open sinners, or even averse to religion. They had once been a pure and holy church; and still they retained the form of religion, although they had declined in its spirit and power. They had lost the holy energy of true Christianity, and had sunk into a listless, lifeless form.

It seems probable that, for some time, the Christians in Sardis had not endured any persecution; otherwise it is not to be conceived, that for a mere name they would have withstood the fiery trial. Things, in all probability, had gone on smoothly; respectability characterized the church: it had become honorable to be a member of it; and numbers, who had nothing of Christianity but the name, had flocked to it, and had become identified with it. How common a case is this! If we were now to be visited with persecution, the greater part of professing Christians would be swept away as chaff.

How different was the state of this church, to that of the one existing in Thyatira. *There*, there was a growing faith and increasing virtues: *here*, all was drooping and declining; and still likely to become more so. If a person, on his travels, had gone from one church to the other, but just 33 miles distant, what a different picture he would have seen.

We must, however, examine the several charges brought against this people.—We notice,

1st. The imperfection of their works. /

This is a plain proof that Jesus Christ looked for true perfection. And this intimation is exactly coincident with the desire expressed for other churches. The Apostle St. Paul prayed that the Hebrews might be perfect in every good work to do his will; and that the Colossians might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. And he declared that the object of his preaching was to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Let patience, says St. James, have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect, wanting nothing. St. Peter prays, that after the Christians, to whom he addressed his councils, had suffered a while, God would make them perfect. To become perfect, the Great Teacher requires us to strike at the root of our besetting sins (Matt. v. 29,30.) Now, all this Jesus wished to realize in this church; and, we may be well assured, he desires to see all churches attain the same degree of perfection. But the Sardinian church did not answer this expectation. In the exercise of his penetrating judgment, the Great Observer did not find their works perfect, (filled up,) before God. This fact is evinced, inasmuch as the works of lifeless professors are,

1. Not performed from a *right principle*—the principle of *love* to God and man. Alas! how often, in what we do attempt, our own selfishness, and not pure benevolence, is the basis of action. The existence of selfishness leaves our works deficient as to their universality, as well as in reference to their quality; many duties being omitted which do not gratify our personal feelings.

2. Not performed with a view to a *right end*—the glory of God. A single eye—a pure intention, ought to influence us in all we do. This would exclude all sinister ends, all double purposes, and would fill us with inexpressible comfort: our whole body would be full of light.

3. Not executed according to a *right rule*—God's holy will. The pure word of God is a perfect directory, and instructs us in God's will concerning us. Any thing not plainly expressed, or clearly implied in the injunctions of that word, is no rule of action, and not obligatory upon us. Such matters may be prudential regulations, which may or may not be attended to, according to the convictions of individuals. But, on the contrary, every thing expressed in the sacred word, or fairly inferable from it, is binding on all men. The persons under consideration act at random, and follow their own judgment or inclination. They set aside the strictest injunctions of God's word, and lay down rules from their own imagination.

4. Not transacted in a *right spirit*—a spirit of humility, patience, meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering. The infraction of any of these eminent graces will render any of our works imperfect.

2nd. They were destitute of vitality.

1st. They had a name that they lived.

They made a profession of Christianity, and had the reputation of Christians: they carried a fair show before men. They had the form of religion; read, prayed, and attended ordinances. They, perhaps, walked in a stately form to church, or had occa-

sionally a religious procession. The neighboring churches held them in high estimation, and praised various good things discoverable in them. This is implied in their having "a name." They were named or spoken of as estimable persons by others. This description is but too suitable to the generality of professors; and also of churches in the present day. Many trust in the name. They rest in some indistinct notions of mercy—some false qualification which, they flatter themselves, they possess. Perhaps they belong to some benevolent society, and make a great noise in the world in that capacity, and for this trust in themselves that they are righteous. The name only will not do: mere profession will not avail: a round of duty is not a substitute for vital piety. After all, such may be but wells without water, clouds without rain, a whited sepulchre, a painted flame, which is so naturally represented, and looks so much like the real one that the perishing traveller may approach it, but can derive no warmth from it. The entire word of God insists upon inward religion. Not every one that *says* Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *does* the will of God, for he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

2. While they had a name among the living, they were actually dead.

A more penetrating eye than the human, surveyed

them: a clear scrutinizing judgment was exercised respecting them. While mortal tongues were celebrating their praises, a divine voice declares, they are dead. They possessed no spirit, vigor or energy: they were not alive to God: they were not earnestly pursuing the way to heaven; and were consequently in danger of the second death. Persons in this state have no interest in the things of God and of a spiritual nature; in the prosperity of religion; or in means of usefulness. They do not love to approach the throne of grace; or earnestly plead there. They are not anxious for a growth in grace, or for the possession of holiness. Yet they have vigor of spirit, and energy in action, but it is not after spiritual, but temporal good. Here they feel a deep concern.

3. Even the things which remained were in a languishing state, ready to die. The little good which still subsisted, was in a very precarious state. The Sardians had grieved the Holy Spirit, and He will not always endure the affronts. When any one has declined in religion, there is need of double watchfulness and earnestness, because every thing is in an expiring condition.

What then is necessary to stay the sinking footsteps of such unhappy persons. The remedy is indicated in the text: as a Divine recipe it ought to gain uncommon attention. In the exercise of faith and prayer let us attend to it in considering:

## II. THE ADVICE TENDERED.

It might have been supposed, that considering such unprofitableness, that this intermediate step would have been dispensed with; and that our Lord would

immediately have proceeded to issue his threatenings. But he is very pitiful and of tender compassion, not willing that any should perish. He gives up no sinner without efforts to reclaim him.

The things here recommended, if strictly attended to, will be efficient in bringing back the soul from its lifeless state to one of holy activity and spiritual life. It is not a mere human opinion of what may reasonably be expected to produce a cure; but the sovereign remedy of the Head of the church himself. These are—

1st. Watchfulness.

Many things of the highest importance require, or admit of, but little definition. This is the case with respect to the important duty under consideration—watchfulness.

Watchfulness is a holy circumspection and vigilance of mind. This is a duty incumbent on all, but especially upon those in a declining state. Guard against those things which have already destroyed the life of religion out of the soul. Be watchful in duty, that you may perform it in a manner which will be beneficial, and by which means you may rise into life and power. -

2nd. Strengthening the things which remain.

This is the very principle we act upon in every thing decaying and tottering. Every good timber, beam and prop, is strengthened, and rendered more secure. So, by a strict and vigilant attention to duty, in all the means of grace—by prayer and faith, strengthen what good is left in the soul. If these things grow weaker, we shall soon sink into one mass

of ruin. If they are strengthened, the progress towards ruin may be stayed, and the whole may be re-edified, and all Christ's ends and designs may be answered in us and by us.

3rd. Reflection of the past—"remember."

Memory connects us with the things of the past. What a blank in our existence would there be if memory were obliterated. But when memory darts backward, many are the impressions and emotions we receive, and of which we are conscious. The memory of past occurrences is, by Jesus Christ, used as an instrument for improvement. His sentiment is, remember the past when thou wast in a prosperous condition; compare it with the present, and see what thou hast lost.

1. Remember what thou hast received—*i. e.*, of the Holy Spirit and his gifts. How thou wast justified, and what were thy happy feelings then. Remember the former manifestations of God's goodness; consider what you felt when before the throne of grace, in audience with the Deity. Many might say,

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But now I find an aching void  
The world can never fill."

2. Remember how thou hast heard—*i. e.*, the word of God: in what spirit; with what profit; with what delight you used to hear the truth of God. You received with meekness that word; it became engrafted, and you grew thereby.

It would do professors good to remember their

espousals to Christ, and their endearing intercourse with him. The Divine Head of the church is not alone in drawing attention to the past. How frequently Moses recounted the way God had lead Israel : and, how frequently the Psalmist traces the same course. Other inspired teachers have proceeded in a similar manner.

#### 4th. Holding fast.

Not only strengthen the things which remain, but hold them fast : let none of them slip away ; and hold fast every additional degree of strength as you receive it. It will easily slide out of your hands ; therefore retain it with a firm-grasp.

It is a weakness of human nature, manifested by some persons, that when they have lost much of what is valuable ; and when they remember what they have been, that they grow discouraged, and are willing recklessly to abandon all. Under temptation they say, it is of no use striving any further, I will give up altogether. But here we are better taught : the word of encouragement is, hold fast what yet remains. Every degree of grace is valuable. There is no reason in the world you should give up the rest, because you have lost so much already. A wise man will double his diligence, in such an emergency, to add to his acquisitions. When men have lost a considerable amount of good, and are careless either of the remainder, or of improving their condition, they are in a dangerous position. Much therefore should we be impressd with the importance of holding fast what we have.

#### 5th. Repent.



Repent of all past misdoings and short comings. Be heartily sorrowful and humble before God for having received so much of his grace in vain. If any persons ought to feel regrets on any account, it is those who have misimproved grace.

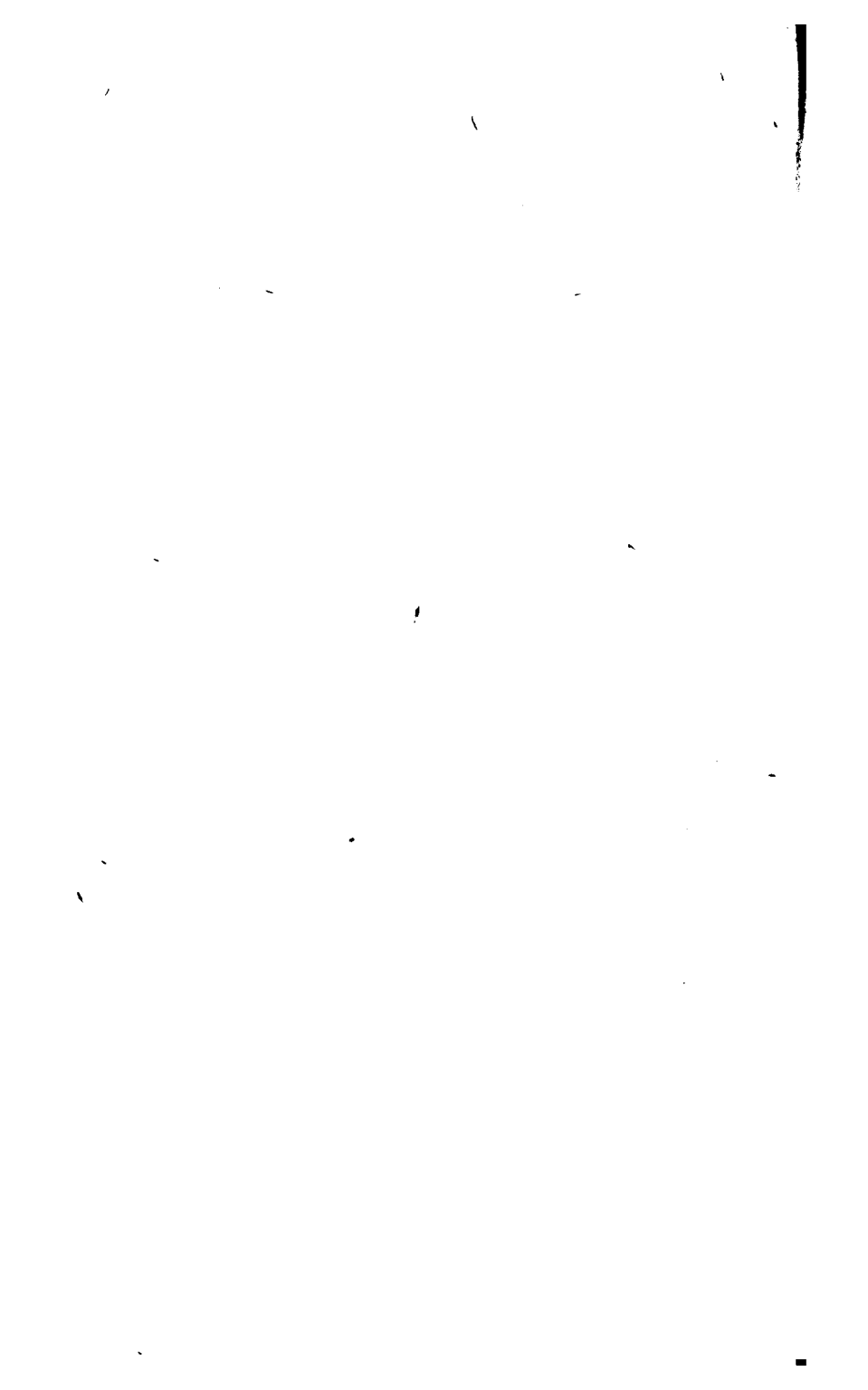
These are infallible prescriptions. Let them be but faithfully attended to, and they will effect a perfect cure. Consider,

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISREGARDING THIS ADVICE. "If, therefore, thou shalt not watch (as now advised and directed), I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

"I will come as a thief" in the night, and by unperceived advances. A thief comes in a secret, concealed manner, taking advantage of the fact, that night has drawn her dark curtains all around, and therefore he comes *unexpectedly*. "If the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through." But because he does not know what hour he will come, he ought to be prepared at all times to contend with him.—At night when all are locked in the arms of sleep. So our Lord has declared he will come *suddenly* and *unexpectedly*. And the expression intimates that the delinquent will be suddenly and unexpectedly overwhelmed in misery. He has assured us he will come; but he has left the time uncertain. And because men disregard the warning, therefore it comes suddenly. Perhaps at a time when they have thought themselves secure; when they have been

crying "peace, peace," sudden destruction has come upon them, by some unexpected judgment.

Therefore, careless sinner; secure, unwatchful professor, who hast lost all thy vitality and vigilance, be apprehensive of this, and attend to the advice previously offered. Go not dreaming on until you awake in eternity. Nothing will awaken some men but the flames of hell themselves. Then, alas! they will awake, and awake to all the horrors of their situation. Now, only, is the day of salvation. All who desire to obtain the crown must cleave close to Jesus and to the means of grace. Be sober, vigilant and steadfast, and thus be ready when the Lord shall call.



## DISCOURSE VII.—THE CHURCH IN SARDIS.

THE ALMOST UNEXAMPLED FIDELITY OF THE MINORITY—SPECIAL FEATURES IN THEIR CHARACTER—ENCOURAGED BY PROMISES OF DISTINGUISHED HONORS AND FELICITY.

REV. III. 4-6.—“*Thou hast a few names even in 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 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 saith unto the churches.*”

In the former discourse I have attempted to describe the general state of the church at Sardis. They are said to have had their works imperfect before God; and to have had a name that they lived, and at the same time they were really dead. Both their experience and practice were deficient.

But in the deepest grief and sorrow there may be some consolation: in the worst state of things there may be something ameliorating. In this church, bad as its general state was, there were some who were worthy of commendation. And at this time I shall proceed to consider the state of the *few* who were exceptions to the generality. And concerning them, let us notice,

I. THE SPECIAL FEATURES IN THE CHARACTER OF THE FEW WHO REMAINED FAITHFUL.

The praise is restricted to one qualification, and that a negative one. They had not defiled their

garments : but yet this negative qualification must include many positive ones—faith, love, watchfulness, firmness. But let us endeavour to give prominence to a few points which seem necessarily included in the description.

1st. It is a melancholy reflection that the *majority* had proved unfaithful, and that but *few* were left who had not defiled their garments. The deviations were numerous. In some of the other churches there were defections in the minority of the members ; but in Sardis the greater part had become corrupt. The ancient inhabitants of this city were reproached for their voluptuous habits ; and perhaps they retained that character to the times of St. John. This might be the occasion of the expression, “ *even in Sardis* ”—even in that corrupt place, the least likely to find purity, some have kept themselves pure.

“ Unspotted in so foul a place,  
And innocently grieved.”

True religion is liable to deterioration in quality under any circumstances, and especially so in some peculiar cases. We see instances of this, in fact, in these epistles. There are many causes at work, all contributing to produce this result : and we see it in course of progress in the many imperfections of professing Christians, even where they are sincere. There are but few eminent for piety—but few stars of the first magnitude. Luther had remarked the rise and decline of many revivals of religion ; and began to see the decline of that, of which he had been made an eminent instrument in its commence-

ment and progress ; and sorrowfully observed that " a revival of religion seldom continues above thirty years." This, however, is not to be taken as a general rule. A revival in religion will continue, not in proportion to the tumultuous agitation on its surface, but according to the depth of its current. The way to promote the stability of a great revival is to do every thing in our power to promote entire sanctification, and that devotedness of life which it implies. Deadness to the world will be one of its results.

2nd. These declensions in religion are more or less gradual.

Among superficial declaimers there is a favorite dogma, that at the time of Constantine, all at once Christianity became corrupt, and the church turned into a den of thieves ; and that, prior to that period, all was spotless and pure—all excellence and perfection. Such persons have imagined that the quotation St. Peter made from Moses was a description answerable to the entire mass ; " Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people."

At first, immediately after the day of Pentecost, they did sustain that character. Then they continued steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer. They had all things common : they daily received the Lord's supper, and attended the public service. (Acts. ii. 41-45.) Great grace was upon them all (34, 35.) There are many descriptions and commendations which afford evidences of the blessed state of things as existing at that time.

But this state of things did not long continue, as it respects the body generally. We must certainly have overlooked the testimonies of the New Testament, and of the early ecclesiastical historians, to form such an opinion. If the testimony of scripture on the point were collected, we should begin to see, that much as we lament the evils of the present day, that we do not stand alone in our imperfect condition. Great defects and serious deviations soon followed a happy state of things. The fine gold soon became dim; and the wine was speedily mingled with water. Ananias and Saphira designed to pass a cheat, even upon the Apostle, to exalt themselves, and at the same time to feed their cupidity. In this act they manifested the highest degree of selfishness and rashness. The Hebrew Christians showed partiality in distributing the daily supplies. The Greeks murmured and complained; they not only showed discontent, but used words indicating such a state of mind, for there was a contention between the two parties. Unkind expressions, evil speaking, hard speeches and backbiting, were indulged in: and it appears the Apostles did not escape injurious imputation. Anger, strife, and contention, soon after this, sprung up in the church. Barnabas, on one occasion, in "a fit of anger," separated from his beloved friend and co-adjutor, Paul,—left his work, and returned home. At Corinth, there were schisms, heresies, animosities and fierce and bitter contentions. And not only thus far, but farther still, there were open, actual and scandalous sins practised; yea, even "such fornication as was not even named among the heathen."

(1. Cor. v. 1.) The Apostle found it necessary to remind them, that neither adulterers, nor thieves, nor drunkards, could enter into the kingdom of God. In all the other Epistles of St. Paul there is sufficient proof that all were not immaculate, "for many," says he, "walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things," (Phil. iii. 18, 19.) By St. James' Epistle we learn that a faith without works filled the church. And by St. Peter we also learn there were some that brought in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them; (2 Epis. ii. 1,) and many followed their pernicious ways. He says, "they walk after the flesh, having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin."

Such was the state of things, even under the pious, watchful, vigilant inspection of the Apostles themselves, and the account given by the Head of the church himself, in these Epistles, is of much the same import.

How affecting the thought, that so many among mankind will be lost. There are but few in a Christian congregation, who sit regularly under the ministry of God's word, that will be saved—yea, not all in the Christian church itself.

Thus we see that Christianity began to be corrupted very early, and was undoubtedly considerably corrupted long before Constantine, although its course was then accelerated. The text presents a picture of general deviations in the day to which it



alludes, which had been gradually growing within the church.

3rd. It is possible, amidst almost universal defection, to be faithful.

Enoch walked with God, when, perhaps, he found none to accompany him in the path. Of Noah it was said, "Thee only have I found righteous in this generation." Abraham persevered in piety, when, it appears, there was but little of true religion either in the land he left, or in that to which he removed. Lot did not defile his garments in a land full of pollution, and the filthiness of the most filthy sins. Daniel, and his three friends, stood firm to God's truth, and persevered in his service when almost all had yielded either to the smiles or the frowns of the wicked. Elijah was not less faithful to God, although he mistakenly thought he was left alone in his allegiance. And when millions in Israel had yielded to the seductions of Jezebel there were 7000 found who resisted all the pressure brought to bear upon them, and remained true to God's covenant. So also the few Sardians, noticed here, resisted all the evil precepts and practices of the licentious Pagans around them, and the weakening effect of the vacillating conduct of their fellow professors. Example is influential; it is an abiding and unwearied kind of sollicitation, which, like a continual dropping, is calculated to wear down the firmest purpose. It is hard to escape pure and uncontaminated, in such cases, and requires much deep religious conviction and unflinching resolution; yet it is possible. Some persons make these very circumstances their plea

for erring; nay, they even allege, that notwithstanding their desire to act otherwise, yet they find it impossible. But, says the Jewish Legislator, "thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil:" or, as the words may be rendered—a multitude of evil persons. The more common the sin is, the more imperative is the duty to use our utmost endeavors to shun it. It is related of Diogenes the Cynic, that one day when the people in crowds were coming out of the theatre, he was endeavoring to make his entrance with great difficulty; being asked why he did so, he replied, "this is what I am endeavoring to do through my whole life," *i. e.*, to act in opposition to the multitude. There will be difficulty in a course of action opposed to the generality, and it will require vigorous exertion; but that energy should be put forth. It is not right to plead difficulty, by way of palliation for deviations.

4th. Such examples of firmness are pleasing in the sight of God.

To be true to the cause of God, and to the church of Christ, in times of great temptation, when the greater part of the members swerve, implies principle, courage, fortitude, and a deep impression of the realities of eternity. Thus Milton draws a beautiful portraiture of Abdiel: he was

—————"Faithful found  
Among the faithless, faithful only he."

He was resolved—

"To stand approved of God, though worlds  
Judged him perverse."

We have already introduced some other examples of firmness, and these have all had tokens of God's approbation. There is, perhaps, no sight on earth more pleasing to God, than to see a man in a difficult position, surrounded by strong temptations, resolutely struggling to overcome them.

Some would, perhaps, say, I will have nothing to do with an imperfect church; there are so many unfaithful, unworthy persons among them, that I will go to heaven alone, and without connexion with them. Then, if you are better than they, why not stay with them and try to mend them? If this is your character you are just the persons wanted, and our appeal to you is, not come with us, and we will do you good; but stay with us, and do us good. And if you are so superior you ought to give better evidence of the higher order of grace you possess than to disobey the command of God. An imperfect church is better than no church: and depend upon it, Christ will never commend you for acting contrary to his own institution. The faithful Sardians did not act in this manner. They still remained in connexion with the Christian church, although it was unfaithful. They knew God could bless them when they used the means of grace, and attended to the ordinances of the Gospel. Neither Luther nor Wesley left the churches with which they were connected, until they were shut out by the opposition of the authorities of these communities. The finger of God clearly pointed out the way before they thought themselves authorized to depart. There is always something to be suspected in splits

and divisions; their authors may complain of corruptions in the church, but it is mostly a sign that there are corruptions in their own hearts.

From the casual notices we have made of these excellent people, we shall be prepared to expect that their religious experience was of an exalted nature; and so we find it in reality. We have,

5th. A figurative description of righteousness and holiness. They had not defiled their garments. Holiness was considered by the Hebrews as the garb of the soul. There are numerous representations in the Scriptures to this effect. Those who had on the wedding garment represent regenerated persons; those clothed in white robes before the throne were holy persons; the fine linen, white and clean, is the righteousness of the saints; the garments of praise denote the joyous state of the newly converted. When it is said, "put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem," (Isa. xxxi. i.) there is a representation of the necessity of the church being clothed with holiness, and with every adorning grace; and what is there more beautiful than holiness! Here the Sardians are represented as not having defiled their garments, to show that they had maintained their integrity. They were a holy people.

Evil actions were considered as spots and stains on their garments. Thus in Jude, ver. 23, "hating even the garments spotten by the flesh." Every deviation from the path of duty is as a spot and stain on a beautifully white and elegant garment. Persons of good taste could not endure such blemishes.

How careful we should be to avoid those moral spots, and defilements. It is an awful thing to sully and defile those garments which have gone through the cleansing process of the Holy Spirit, by the means of the blood of Christ. "He that defileth the temple of God, him shall God destroy." It was a high commendation that some had preserved themselves pure. These eminent persons had washed their robes, and had thus made them white in the blood of the Lamb. *They* are said to do it, because the faith which they exercise in Christ is a personal, voluntary act. But they also acknowledge that Christ washes them, for they ascribe glory to him for it. (Rev. i. 5.) And they know that in the Divine arrangements the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier—the agent for accomplishing their sanctification.

Their garments, thus washed, they had preserved clean, by watching, prayer, faith, and cleaving to Jesus. A contact with the sinful ways of the world would have defiled their garments; but by a strict observance of the above practice, they maintained a holy and consistent walk—a spotless purity.

6th. Such persons are in the way of final victory. "He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment." They have overcome many things already: but still there are many things to overcome. The faithful saints are *overcoming*: they are going on conquering to conquer. Like a hero having gloriously gained several victories, and proceeding to gain others. If they act on the principles by which they have hitherto been actuated they shall finally conquer.

We notice, finally—

II. THEIR REWARD. “They shall walk with me in white for they are worthy,” &c.

Their moral fitness for the reward is noticed. “They are worthy,”—worthy to be rewarded. Nothing is done in an arbitrary manner: nothing without just cause, either in punishment or reward. They were worthy in an evangelical sense. They were made meet for the reward. Their conduct was worthy of their profession. They were faithful to the grace received, and acted up to its divine influences. Hence,

2nd. They shall walk with Christ in white.

In some solemn investigations, where severe tests were applied, a white garment was given to those who stood the ordeal, as a token of that fact. Having been found pure by the investigation, they are proved to be worthy of such a token. It was the custom of the Sanhedrim, when they examined the candidates for the high-priesthood, if they judged the candidate worthy, to give him a white garment; if unqualified, he was sent out in mourning. It is said that in the primitive church, the worthy candidates for baptism were all clothed in white garments, previous to the administration of the rite.

White robes are not only tokens of qualification, but also symbols of prosperity, felicity and joy. White robes were worn on occasions of festivals and rejoicings; and sometimes in triumphal processions. Here, therefore, our Lord may intimate, “I will head a triumphal procession in which they shall join. They shall walk with me in white.”

The words foreshow their glorification. The description designates the happiness and the triumph of the dwellers in the heavenly Jerusalem.

3rd. The retention of his name in the record of life.

The book of life is much spoken of in Scripture ; and the insertion and retention of the names of the faithful in it. There may be a reference, \_

1. To the Roman soldiery. There was a muster roll, and the names of these who were cashiered for misconduct were expunged from it.

2. To civil life. In states and cities those who obtained freedom were enrolled in the public registers : this enrolment was their title to the privileges of citizens. They might forfeit this privilege by misconduct and so be struck off from the roll.

3. To the Jewish priests. "The great council of Israel sat, and judged the priests. If in a priest any vice was found they stripped off his white garment and clothed him in black, in which he wrapped himself, went out and departed ; and his name was erased. Those in whom no vice was found they clothed in white, and he took his part in the ministry, among his brother priests." (Maddoth, fol. 37.)—Dr. Clarke in loc.

4. To the registers of the church. The names of those who were initiated into the church by baptism were registered in a book kept for that purpose. God is represented as registering those he acknowledges as genuine Christians : "they are written among the living." None but those whose names could be found on the genealogical tables

were recognized as genuine Jews, as is evident from the transactions of the times of Nehemiah; and none but those whose names God records in his book are recognized as genuine Christians. Ezekiel records respecting the false prophets, that "they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel." (Chap. xiii. 9.)

The great Head of the church engages to preserve in his register—the book of life,—the names of all those who, like faithful members of the church of Sardis, shall preserve their allegiance, in a corrupted and supine society, and shall persist in a faithful discharge of their Christian duties. He will own them as his fellow citizens before men and angels. "I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." This, heavenly Father, is one of my faithful brethren; O ye holy angels honor this heir of glory!

On the contrary, David, personifying the Messiah, declares God's judgments on his enemies, and among the number, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous." (Ps. lxix. 28.)

This must signify that the name may be blotted out. He who has once been regenerated, made holy and happy in the favour of God, and thus fitted for eternal life, for none else have their names written there, may fall from grace, lose God's favour, and be left to perish. It is sometimes thought, and said, that those who finally fall never had grace: but here persons who had grace, are spoken of as under the lia-



bility of being rejected. Let this teach us the necessity of an humble dependence upon God's constant watchfulness, and earnest prayer.

From the whole subject let us learn,

1. No filthy person can enter heaven; all sinners are filthy and defiled, and if not washed must occupy that place this Apostle assigns them. (Chap. xxi. 8; 27; xxii. 15.) Ye that are unclean, come and be washed; the fountain stands open. And Jehovah is anxious to reason with you on the subject. (Isa. i. 16, 18.)

2. Backsliders must be re-washed, for they have again defiled their garments. O bewail your condition, and come afresh to the all cleansing fountain.

3. Believers! be faithful. Set your face against sin, in whomsoever found.

4. May Christ of his mercy and grace bring us all to glory, honor, and immortality. Amen.

## DISCOURSE VIII.—THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA.

### COMMENDED AND ENCOURAGED.

REV. III. 7-13.—“*And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia 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 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 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 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. Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*”

PHILADELPHIA was, in point of importance, the second city of Lydia, in Asia Minor. It derived its name from its founder, Attalia Philadelphus, king of Pergamos. He was surnamed Philadelphus from his fraternal love. He flourished about 150 years B. C. and was contemporaneous with the immediate successors of Alexander the Great, at the time when they were extending their conquests. His predecessors had entered into contest with them, and had maintained their independence. The Romans

succeeded to his kingdom at the death of his successor, B. C. 133, and consequently this city then fell under their jurisdiction. The kingdom was constituted a Roman Province, which was the relation it sustained in the time of St. John. This city is situated on a plain, at the foot of mount Timolus, and partly extends up the acclivity. Its site is 25 miles S. of Sardis, and 75 miles in a direction nearly S. of Smyrna.

In the terrible earthquake, which happened in the reign of Tiberias, A. D. 17, and which produced such devastating effects in all that part of Asia, this city was, to a great extent, a sharer in its desolations; but it continued to be a place of considerable importance down to the Byzantine age. Such was its strength that it resisted the Turks the longest of all the cities of Asia. At length it was captured by Bajazet I. in A. D. 1392. From these particulars we conclude, that in St. John's time it was a flourishing city. Its present name is Allah-Shehr—"the city of God," or the High-town. Although at present meanly built, it is in a state of greater prosperity than almost any of the other places where the seven churches were located; it is next to Smyrna in the number of resident Christians; it contains from 15,000 to 20,000 inhabitants, of whom 1000 are professing Christians, principally of the Greek church: the remainder are Turks. It has 25 churches, a resident Bishop, and 20 inferior clergy.

The attributes assumed by our Lord Jesus Christ, in addressing the Philadelphians, are holiness, truth, and supreme power in the church; and each of these

are exactly adapted to their circumstances. He is holy and true, and will reject all pretenders to the claim of being his people. The Philadelphians had their attention and efforts especially directed to this object. Christ here pronounces these pretenders to be of the synagogue of Satan, and declares them to be liars in instituting a claim to be God's people. He signifies his approval of the holiness and truthfulness of these his faithful people, and sanctions their endeavors in exposing those pests to Christianity. He has the key of David; and admits, or excludes from his church, irrespective of hereditary pretences. He openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth: he admits and excludes without any human interference. The Philadelphian church, it appears, had acted on these principles, and would not admit any one within its pale, or to any office or authority in it, without such qualifications as Christ would approve. And our Lord was so far satisfied with their conduct, that he signifies his purpose to strip the vain pretenders to ecclesiastical authority of their importance; and to make them come and do homage to his decided adherents. This prediction was, in some degree, fulfilled in the troubles which shortly afterwards befel that locality; but which will be fulfilled to a wider extent before the triumphs of Christianity are completed.

Notwithstanding these reproofs, there are yet some pretended churches who claim to have the keys; they boldly assume that no one can be admitted into the church of Christ except they administer the

rite of admission, and that no one has authority to administer the rite of admission except it be granted by themselves. But here our Lord asserts that he has the keys in his hands, and that none can open and shut but himself and undoubtedly he will ere long prove such vain arrogators of Divine rights to be liars; and, at the same time, manifest his approbation of these faithful servants who have endeavored to expose their dogmatism.

The character of the seven churches is not very flattering, with two or three honorable exceptions. Smyrna and Philadelphia were the most distinguished for faithfulness. We are now to consider the description of the latter of these eminent churches; that by the light of their holy example, we may be guided to the path of holiness. Let us notice,

I. THE COMMENDATION BESTOWED UPON THEIR EXCELLENCIES.

The Philadelphians, like the Smyrnians, are commended, without any mixture of censure.

Let us not forget that this is the praise of an intelligent observer: of him who knows the heart and its motives. "I know thy works"—the *true character* of what is performed—the *extent* of thine efforts—how much thou hast *suffered*—all thy *desires* after me, and the *efforts* thou hast put forth to advance in the knowledge of Christ, and in the experience of his grace—all the *secret agonies* thou hast felt. Our assurance of this fact should greatly encourage us in our struggles after holiness. But let us come to the several particulars.

1st. Thou hast a little strength.

Does our Lord mean little absolutely, or comparatively? We may suppose the former to be the thing he intended; compared with other Christians, they appear to have had equal strength: they had power to do and to suffer the will of God. It had been put to the test and had been proved to be sufficient to answer the purpose of enduring the trial; and they had acted nobly in their exertions in the cause of God. But, absolutely considered their strength, and the strength of any one, is small.

But all the strength we may possess is nothing of ourselves; "without me ye can do nothing;" "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee;" "Thou strengtheneth me with strength in my soul;" (Ps. lxxxiv. 5; xxxviii. 8.) "Strengthened with might in the inner man;" or, mightily strengthened in the soul. Yet, even a little strength is a blessing; and Christ does not pass it by without notice; and it should not be overlooked, or undervalued by us. "If thou faint in the day of adversity thy strength is small." Small indeed, comparatively small!

As in physical, so in spiritual things, our strength will increase by exercise, or it may be lessened by slothfulness. There is, therefore, a reason for praise when it is great, and of censure when it is small.

2nd. Thou hast kept my word.

The word of Christ is the true doctrine which he taught, and the precepts which he enjoined. To keep it is to hold it fast in all its integrity: to yield obedience to it. It will be no small blessedness to us if Christ shall one day judicially say to us, "Thou hast kept my word." Here then,

1. This church was distinguished for holding true doctrine. All evangelical churches have, in the main, the truth of Christ's doctrine ; but they may have some little mixture of error, or may fail to admit the whole truth. It is an incomparable blessing to have in the church of Christ the genuine, unadulterated doctrines of the Gospel—the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. We cannot too rigidly adhere to the plain, and obvious sense of God's word. Every degree of distortion is wicked and dangerous.

There are too many chimerical views in religion, and omissions of what God has plainly commanded are numerous and alarming.

2. They were equally distinguished for purity of practice. They lived according to the doctrine and the precepts. This is comprehended in the sense of keeping the word. It is possible to hold the truth in unrighteousness to be orthodox in doctrine but erratic in practice. But it is beautiful to see doctrine and practice coincide with each other, and mutually illustrate each other. This is especially the case when the doctrines in question are such as, in their practical development, expose their maintainers to persecutions, insults, and trials. Such was the case with the Philadelphians, hence our Lord terms it, "the word of my patience." (ver. 10.) In almost every period of the Christian church some of the most essential doctrines of the Gospel have been frowned upon. The maintainance of justification by faith exposes Luther, and afterwards Wesley, to much opposition : and the doctrine of perfect love, or evangelical Christian perfection, has met with the same fate.

There have been times, during the existence of Christianity, when no man could safely profess the Deity of Christ ; but it is an honor to hold fast every essential doctrine, especially in the midst of opposition. To the present time the doctrines taught by the venerable Founder of Methodism are as clearly, discriminately and faithfully preached, as they were in the commencement of the career of our body. May God give us grace to hold them fast : may we clearly apprehend them, joyfully experience them, and faithfully practice them.

3rd. Thou hast not denied my name.

They confessed Christ at all hazards. They had peculiar temptations to deny the name of Christ in the time of persecution. They were brought into the heathen temples, and required to blaspheme that worthy name by which they were called, and to sacrifice to the idol. But it appears those faithful professors boldly persisted in confessing Christ. This is much to their praise. We are called upon to confess our religion wherever we are. In doubtful company some persons would be ashamed that those present should know that they professed earnest Christianity. Some, we have seen, on being a little elevated in position, have been ashamed to associate with their former brethren, and have sought to worship with the fashionable ; but, says our Divine Master, “ who-soever is ashamed of me, and of my words, in this wicked and adulterous generation, of him will I be ashamed before my holy angels.” Some persons have a great reluctance to profess Christianity by an actual alliance with the church. They allege



that their responsibility would become too great; but can we engage to discharge any duty without responsibility? and are we warranted to flinch from responsibility in a matter of the highest importance? We were never intended for isolation in any of the concerns of life; it is a contradiction to our whole nature, and, in spiritual matters, the estrangement produces a deeper injury. Were there any Christians at Philadelphia, or in any place where there was a primitive church, and yet such Christians live without being members of the church?

This church, it appears, was faithful in doctrine, experience, practice, and profession; and this embraces the whole of Christianity. Let us notice,

## II. THE BLESSINGS GRANTED IN CONSIDERATION OF THIS FAITHFULNESS.

The promises to each church are adapted to something in their state and circumstances; this may be specially remarked in relation to this church. God never permits us to do or suffer any thing for him without ample remuneration. The members of this church were fully compensated for their faithfulness.

1st. They had set before them an open door.

In metaphorical language a door is any way of entrance which affords facilities for the accomplishment of a given object. An open door signifies an entrance freed from all impediments. The words were applicable to them;

1. Individually. Nothing should stop their progress in higher spiritual attainments, many things may interfere, but God can by providential interpositions, and by spiritual aids, facilitate our progress,

and remove all impediments. What is Satan's power? It lies only in temptation and persecution, not in coercion? What is the world? It can only entice or frown, it cannot force.

2. Combinedly. He will increase their opportunities of doing good; enlarge their sphere of usefulness, and will remove all obstructions out of the way. Plans of usefulness, which they may devise, shall not be counteracted, but shall have a successful issue. Christ, by his providence, opens the door into any useful work. Every individual, howsoever small his talent, or howsoever limited his opportunity, may find something in which he may be usefully employed. Each one may do something for God. They were to be successful in stripping pretenders of their false assumptions, and in causing them to submit to the truth. "Behold I will make them of the synagogue of 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." The Jews were the enemies of true Christians; and our Lord says they were not truly Jews, and he would cause them to see the hand of the Lord with his church, so as to bring them to submission, and to an acknowledgement of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah, sent of God.

God always blesses a faithful church with great usefulness. Most churches, which have been established in sincerity, and which are faithful to their calling, have *their mission*. There are scenes of labor into which Divine providence leads them.

Some of the churches of the present day have their labors directed to the Jews; others to the Armenians, and to the ancient and languishing churches of the East; others, again, are directed to China, and to other particular objects and spheres of labor. The mission of the Wesleyans was, in the first instance, to the masses, and to the revival of all other churches. These objects she has been steadily and successfully pursuing, and to a considerable extent has accomplished her object. Not losing sight of our original calling, now we are providentially directed to regions beyond the British empire and her colonies. The several branches of this church are encircling the world with their mission stations.

Some churches have their *distinct testimony*; thus the reformers had to deliver a testimony, and protest against Popish errors. Some of the Secession churches of Scotland see it to be their special duty to protest against the interference of the civil authorities in ecclesiastical matters, and to strongly uphold the Divine Headship of the Redeemer in his church. The testimony of our church has been the direct witness of the Holy Spirit to our pardon and acceptance, on the exercise of faith in the atonement and satisfaction of Christ; and to the doctrine of a full salvation from sin by the blood of Christ. This mission and this testimony, Mr. Wesley thought, might be executed without his separation from the church into which he was ordained a minister. And these objects were prosecuted in that connexion until he, and more especially we after him, have had those doors gradually shut

against us. Since then our church has entered those open doors, and has proceeded in that course, specially directed by a divine and gracious providence.

2nd. Christ acknowledged them before their enemies.

He engaged to give them such tokens of his approbation as that their enemies should distinctly perceive that their Divine Master was with them, and that he loved them; and to cause them to acknowledge and reverence his own people. The hand of the Lord was to be distinctly seen in the Divine presence with them, and their consequent spiritual power. Perhaps, also, special interpositions of Divine providence were exercised in their behalf.

3rd. In preservation from trial.

First, he would grant them great support in their trials: and because they were patient and faithful in trials, he would engage to preserve them from further trials. This is often the case. Abraham, having been fully tested, does not appear to have had any further trials. The faithful are often hid from those trials which fall, with unmitigated force, upon the unfaithful.

But, it appears from the text, that there was a special trial about to fall upon all the world, *i. e.*, upon all the Roman empire, called "the hour of temptation," (ver. x.) and from this they had a promise of preservation, because they had kept the word of Christ's patience. This happened under the Emperor Trajan. In the general infliction of its evil the keen edge was to be dulled, as far as it could affect the Philadelphian Church.

4th. He will promote their stability and permanence. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more."

In the 7th chap. of the 1st Book of Kings there is an account of Hiram making two pillars in the house of God, of his setting them up, and naming them Jachin and Boaz. Jachin signifies, "It shall be established," and Boaz signifies, "In it is strength." This man was filled with wisdom, and that wisdom might apply not barely to the construction of his work, but perhaps was also evinced in the names he bestowed upon these pillars. It might be a prophetic inspiration, by which he emblemized the characteristics of the spiritual church. This we may specially premise, inasmuch as Christ most probably here alludes to the circumstance. St. Paul, James, Cephas and John, were as pillars in the primitive church. The promise evidently expresses what should be the condition of these faithful people of God—they shall be *established* and shall be *strong*. They shall be strong and permanent supporters of the cause of God. Stability is a great qualification for usefulness. "Unstable as water thou shalt not excel." Unstable persons are sometimes for God, and sometimes for the world: and when they are for God, you will find them at different times associated with some half dozen various churches.

5th. He will have the name of God inscribed upon him. "I will write upon him the name of my God." He shall be labelled, or have an inscription impressed upon him. That inscription was to be "the name of God"—"the new name"—"the name of the

city of Jerusalem." That impression was probably to be shown in the character, or in the outward manifestation of a heavenly disposition.

Labelling was the affixing of a mark signifying property : believers are God's property, and the mark designates them as such—the *intention*, or *purpose* for which a thing is to be employed : believers are consecrated to God's service. They shall be marked as my property ; their high destination shall be rendered conspicuous. They are intended to have a place in the heavenly Jerusalem. They are consecrated to my service and shall be my devoted, faithful, useful people. Upon the forehead of the High-Priest was an inscription, "Holiness to the Lord," signifying he was consecrated to God's holy service. So the Christian is ever to remember his high designation to be holy, and to promote holiness. "Thou shalt put my name upon the children of Israel."

"I will," says Christ, "write upon him my new name." What is that? Almost every name had been assumed by him already in his addresses to St. John, and to the churches. In Chap. xix. ver. 11-16, Christ is prominently exhibited as seated on a white horse, caparisoned as a man of war : his name is there called "The word of God." He was to smite the nations, and then to rule them ; or to subdue them with vigour. And there was on his vesture, and on his thigh—on conspicuous parts of his person, a name written—"King of kings and Lord of lords." The whole description is one applicable to a manifestation of the conquering Son of God, through his atonement. It contains the ideas

of Conquerors and Rulers. It expresses dignity, honour and dominion. His conquering people are badged with some name, as designed to share glory with him. The faithful Christian says,

“ The glorious crown of righteousness  
To me reached out I view ;  
Conqueror through him I soon shall seize,  
And wear it as my due.”

Encouraging his people to steadfastness, he says, “ Behold I come quickly”—thou wilt not have long to endure ; therefore, “ hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” All our trials will be short, and then inexpressible glory.

## DISCOURSE IX.—THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA.

THEIR DEPLORABLE STATE—THREATENINGS AND COUNSELS ADDRESSED TO THEM.

REV. III. 14-18 :—*“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write ; these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God ; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot : I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my 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 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 eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

THE original name of this city was Diospolis, and afterwards it was called Rhoas. It received the name of Laodicea in honor of Laodice, the wife of Antiochus. It is situated in Asia Minor, on the borders of Caria, Phrygia, and Lydia, and was the capital city of the greater Phrygia ; it stood about 40 miles east of Ephesus. It was a considerable city at the time this epistle was addressed to the church ; it seems, from its ruins, to have been situated upon six or seven hills, and to have occupied a large extent of ground. It was also celebrated for its commerce, and the fine wool of its sheep.

The frequency of the earthquakes, which occurred in those parts, some ages after, demolished the greater part of the city, destroyed many of its in-



habitants, and in course of time drove the remainder of its inhabitants entirely to abandon the spot. It is now utterly ruined and deserted, and is called by the Turks Eski-hassar, or Old Castle.

Of course we should expect that the church has been abhorrently cast out by Christ; and the fact accords with this expectation. There is not a Christian on the spot.

A Christian church was early formed in this place. St. Paul addressed an Epistle to them, and directed that the Epistle to the Ephesians should be read to them. From this circumstance we might suppose that they were similar in state and character, *i. e.*, at that time, in a good and prosperous condition; but it appears that they both declined in the same direction. The Ephesians “left their first love;” they had ceased to be warm and glowing in their devotion and services; and the Laodiceans were also cool, or lukewarm. The church in Sardis was also too much like them, for they were in a state of inanition and dormancy.

In addressing this church our Lord styles himself the Amen—the Faithful and True Witness—the beginning of the creation of God; all which terms appear to afford a hint of the necessity of stability and firmness, and a reproof for the contrary.

The *Amen*, immediately interpreted by the True and Faithful Witness, is he who is continually attesting the truth of all that has been revealed to you; and confirming the certainty of all that he has promised you. There is an Amen in heaven, evinced in Christ’s wounds and blood, presented before the

Father, to all he has done in redemption, and offered to man here on earth in consequence of it. This word is properly an adjective, or one which denotes a quality ; in this form it signifies *firm and true*. In Isaiah, lxxv. 16, Jehovah is styled the God of Amen ; our English version renders it the God of truth. The word is generally used adverbially, *i. e.*, expressive of the manner, or circumstances of the thing, the same as *verily, truly, certainly*. It is used at the end of a sentence, or prayer, to confirm the truth of the assertion, and to desire the fulfilment of the petition. When the priest repeated the words of the covenant, or of an imprecation, and when the people added Amen, they bound themselves by the oath, and engaged themselves to the obligation of it.

*The beginning of the creation of God.*—The Author, Head, and Ruler of the creation of God.

How far does this description apply to the state of this church ? It appears that there is something specially suited to it. I am the True and Faithful Witness : I am firm, unchangeable, and unalterable. I am the Author of all things, at the head of all things, and I control all things. Their state was one of unsettledness—neither one thing nor another. He was steadfast and unalterable, always exact in decision, and purpose. Thy conduct shall be dealt with according to its merits. The titles remind them that he was faithful and true in granting all he had promised ; for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us. In this spirit, says the Apostle Paul, I guided myself in my preaching and movements ;

I so conduct myself that there should be no yea, yea, and nay, nay, in my purposes; and our Lord signifies that as he was ever true, faithful and steadfast, in all his provisions and dealings, they ought not to have manifested such wavering conduct, and such want of firm purpose. It is contrary to my character as your great Exemplar. He reminds them, also, that he is the same in his requirements, and will surely deal with them as he has dealt with all other persons under like circumstances.

“The Head of the church speaks to it with serious and earnest intent, and calls for deliberate attention. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.” The ancient Heathen used to go to consult their oracles—the Jews to the High Priest, that he might consult the Urim and Thummin, to know God’s will. Here the Spirit, the true and infallible oracle, speaks; and any one who wishes to be guided aright will surely attend to this infallible voice. In this Epistle the Holy Spirit points out errors it is essential for us all to avoid—directs to duties incumbent on all to perform—gives instructions necessary for all to know.

To a Christian there is a special interest in the circumstances of this church. In almost every other church there is something to commend, as well as to censure. But, it seems, when a church is sunken in a state of luke-warmness, *there is nothing at all commendable*: it is pure, unmitigated evil; a blight which withers every flower in the fair paradise. They might possibly possess pure forms of worship, and have the true doctrines of the Gospel

faithfully preached among them : but yet Jesus Christ would not commend them. All is as a stink in his nostrils without the warmth and fervor of heavenly love.

In the Epistle to the Laodiceans there are several distinct particulars, so specific as to demand separate notice and attention. There is—their state exactly delineated—a special effort to arouse them from it—the enforcement of a true expression of a return to correct feelings—and a statement of the blessed consequences of that conduct. Each of these particulars will furnish us with a topic for discussion and improvement. The remainder of this discourse will be occupied with the first of these items. We will proceed then to notice—

#### I. THE DEPLORABLE STATE OF THE LAODICEAN CHURCH.

It was “neither cold nor hot” but lukewarm. There is heat in love, producing the fervor of zeal. “The love of Christ constraineth us.” “Its coals are as the coals of juniper; many waters cannot quench love.” A state of coldness is a state of unconcern. The great things of eternity, in which all are so deeply interested, seem to have but little effect. It is discovered by love of ease, hatred to the cross, want of earnestness, and by a dislike to fervent zeal. This state is,

1st. A state of indifference and indolence.

Religion is either *true* or *false*. Which of these is fact, is the first question which ought to engage the mind of a human being. If *false*, it is worth nothing; if it is worthless, it does not command

our serious concern ; but if *true*, it is a tremendous truth—it is worth every thing.

If religion is false, *reject* it with scorn : be cold, and indifferent : trifle with it. But, if true, give it your best attention : give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.

Nevertheless there are some persons who believe religion to be true, but who are yet lukewarm. It does not produce an entire absorption ; they cannot be persuaded to reject it altogether, yet they regard it with great indifference. To such we would say, on your own admissions, religion is everything ; it is happiness ; it will elevate the soul ; it will secure its safety. Therefore, embrace it, pursue it, agonize for it ; be in earnest to possess it, and act according to your conviction. To be indifferent here is the utmost absurdity—the highest folly.

But, as it respects most men, they believe in the Being of a God ; but how do they regard His character ? They believe in heaven and hell, and yet act as though neither were objects of importance : or, as if neither ought to influence their conduct. They believe they have an immortal soul of more value than thousands of worlds, and yet care more for a trifling portion of this world—more for the body,—than for it. Lay up a heap of treasure before a miser, and tell him that for a limited space he may carry away as much as he chooses to gather ; and do you imagine he would be idle ? Yet here are inestimable riches, “ than gold and pearls more precious far ”—riches for eternity ; but men who profess to apprehend their value scarcely lay hold of any fraction.

Place honours at the disposal of the ambitious, and they would decorate themselves with a liberal hand ; but the highest and most unfading honours and glories are neglected, and the lukewarm remain in voluntary degradation.

But why are they indifferent and indolent ? Are they rich ? full ? Do they possess a sufficient store ? Alas no, for they are

2nd. In a state of destitution.

What a catalogue of particulars in which this destitution consists, is given in the text. The persons described were—

1. Wretched.

The word signifies, the strength worn—the person exhausted and haggard—such as arises from hard labor, famine, or scarcity. These people had not fed on Christ ; they had not partaken of the fatness of the house of God.

2. Miserable.

The word signifies most deplorable. How can such persons be happy ? To behold them is to pity and commiserate them, for they are in a most deplorable state.

3. Poor.

They are really destitute, unsupplied. They have no riches of grace in the soul ; they are not rich in faith or hope ; they are destitute of the favour of God, of his image, and of the enjoyment of God.

4. Blind.

They do not possess any spiritual vision, or perceptions ; they discover no excellency in Christ, and no beauties in holiness. How anxious was the

Apostle Paul that Christians might see and apprehend the amazing provisions of the Gospel.

5. Naked.

To complete the wretchedness they have no covering. They are destitute of the wedding garment, and have not the "linen white and clean, which is the righteousness of the saints. They have not those beautiful garments with which the church is exhorted to adorn herself.

Picture to yourself, literally, such an object. See a being, despicable in appearance, covered with tatters, or rather, whose tatters do not cover him; blind withal, and wandering about, stumbling over every intervening object, and falling into every pit which is on the path he pursues. In addition, this poor creature is destitute of support, pining with hunger; and has nothing with which to procure a supply. His strength exhausted, and he is miserably haggard in appearance. How deplorable the state of such an individual! What an object of pity! how he cries for help! and yet such is the true picture of the spiritual condition of the individuals here described.

If we were to meet with a description of a state of indolence and ease, we should suppose its subjects were in the enjoyment of plenty. And if we were to see a description of wretchedness and want, we should suppose its subjects were all anxiety and dejectedness, or that they were constantly crying for help and succor. But here we see that those in the latter position assume the condition of the former, for the Laodicean state,

3rd. Is a state of arrogance and spiritual pride.

They were satisfied with themselves, and felt no need of faith, or of higher attainments. They went on in easy indolence, without any vivid attention to the Spirit of God. They affirmed they were rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing. They boasted of great attainments and possessions; and were ignorant of their real destitution. Does it not almost surpass belief that persons so empty could fancy themselves so replenished. How could a person, so destitute as this description understood literally, implies, fancy himself possessed of a large estate, and overflowing coffers? He could not, if he possessed his reason; some individuals, who have lost their reason, have fancied themselves princes, and, although confined in a mad-house, have thought they dwelt in a palace; although surrounded by keepers, have imagined they were attended by lieges. The cause of the misjudgment of those under our notice is easily accounted for on the score of *spiritual delusion*. The God of this world had blinded their minds.

All this may be from one or other of two entirely different causes, under the control of Satan's influence.

1st. From Pharisaism.

The Jews, in the worst period of their history, cried, "The temple of the Lord are we." The Pharisee, in the temple, boasted of many good things; but he was a guilty sinner, unjustified. Of the two worshippers who stood there, the Publican *only* went down to his house justified. Many persons,



who boast of their goodness, have no faith, no justification, and, therefore, no righteousness.

2nd. From Antinomianism.

These boast, I once experienced religion, and therefore am safe ; I thank God he has given me to see, I must be accepted in Christ. Such persons have a notional faith, and a supposed imputed righteousness, in a false sense. I am complete in Christ, they will maintain, and because he was meek, humble, patient, holy, it is all imputed to me, and I am thus accounted righteous in him, although I have nothing of the kind in myself.

But, saith the Faithful and True Witness, I know thy works, I know exactly what is their real nature ; and I will deal with thee accordingly ; and he plainly states what he would do. Let us, for our own advantage, distinctly notice,

II. THE TREATMENT THREATENED. “ I will spue thee out of my mouth”—I will nauseate thee—I will reject thee or cast thee away.

1st. The Head of the church has a strong hatred to lukewarmness.

1. It is abhorrent to his feelings.

It is as though Christ said to the Laodicean church, “ Thy indifference is disagreeable to me— as disagreeable as lukewarm water taken into the mouth of one panting after the cooling stream.— I wish thou wouldst determine one way or another ; for any state would better accord with my feelings than this one. I can almost look with more satisfaction on the man who has brought himself to suppose there is no God, and no truth in reli-

gion, than on one who, professing to believe all the reality and importance of religion, yet acts as though they were merely trivial matters."

2. It is abhorrent to his character.

It is honest in a man, who does not believe the truth of religion, to be indifferent concerning it ; but for one firmly to believe it, in all its tremendous importance, and still to act with indifference in reference to it, is out of all character, and hateful to me as the true and faithful witness. The Lord prefers consistency and honesty to the reverse. A man who acts up to principles, whatever they may be, is more honest and upright, than one who holds even that which is truth, in unrighteousness. Hence, here the Redeemer says, " I would thou wert either cold or hot ; but would rather that even thou wert cold than lukewarm." " Woe to him that is at ease in Zion." Woe indeed to the man who can be easy, who will not be in earnest, when the salvation of his own soul, and the souls of others, is involved ; who will not endeavor to snatch sinners from endless ruin.

3. It is abhorrent to his goodness.

There is more hope of the recovery of one utterly cold, without any thought or profession of religion, than there is of one who is lukewarm ; and consequently the Divine Saviour expresses a stronger disapprobation against the one state than against the other.

2nd. He will cast off the lukewarm from his favour and protection.

He will eject from his presence such persons, like

one ejecting lukewarm water from his mouth ; and then they have no share in his regards or sympathies. The enjoyment of the favour of God is the greatest blessing on earth ; it is next to the blessedness of heaven ; and consequently, the loss of the conscious favour of God is the greatest loss any man can sustain. If God is not for us he is against us, and withholds his grace and blessedness.

Such persons ought to be cast out of the church, not only because they have profited all title to membership, but because they will have a deadening, a withering, and a contaminating influence upon others.

3rd. He will cast off the lukewarm from all participation in his eternal reward.

This is but the carrying out of the uttered threatening ; for if God abstracts his favour, grace, and blessings, he will drive such from his presence and glory. They may cry, Lord ! Lord ! hast thou not been on terms of intimacy with us ? But he will say, Depart ! I know you not ! I do not acknowledge you !

But he does not so cast off in this world, as to be unwilling to receive the delinquent, when he alters his course ; and he will still use means to promote such an end. He here tenders his advice, and we are next to consider,

### III. THE COUNSEL ADDRESSED TO THEM.

“I counsel thee to buy,” &c. In a figurative manner he invites the fallen Laodiceans to endeavor to obtain the highest gifts, to gain the state and blessings they had lost.

1st. Genuine gold—tried gold, not spurious.—Real blessings, not imaginary, as was at present their case. Faith is thus spoken of by St. Peter: (1 Pet. 1. 7.) “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” The day of the Lord shall declare the nature of every man’s work of faith, what it is, for it shall then be tried by fire, or by a severe test. Let us get a genuine faith, and let us test it before hand, to know that it is genuine. As gold procures any thing valuable, and is itself the standard of value, so faith is precious, and obtains for us every spiritual blessing. St. Paul prays that God would work in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power—a powerful faith is the instrument of procuring all the rest.—The sum of this advice is, “have faith in God,”—exercise what you have.

2nd. White raiment. According to former explanations on the terms robes, raiment, &c., holiness is here meant. Christ is intent on the holiness of his people. It follows, in this place, appropriately after faith. The Apostle, speaking of this process in the instance of Gentile believers, says, “Purifying your hearts by faith,”—“Sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus.” Let us, then, come to the fountain: “wash you: make you clean,”

“Sink into the purple flood,  
Rise to all the life of God.”

3rd. Eye-salve. To take away the film, and all impediments to seeing. So everything which inter-

cepts the light of the Gospel from reaching our spiritual perceptions is to be removed, by means adapted to effect the purpose, that the glorious provisions of salvation, when presented by the Gospel, may make their due impression. This end will be answered by admitting and improving the influences of the Holy Spirit. By his divine light we may discover every impediment to improvement in grace, and by his power make strenuous efforts to subdue sin and error. Then we shall have proper sentiments and right judgments of the things of God, according to their just value. Thus the Apostle Paul regarded the matter, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints; and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe." (Eph. i. 18, 19.) "That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness." (Phil. i. 10, 11.) How is it that the deep things of God are so constantly presented to us by the Gospel, and we are so little affected by them? There is some evil, or disease in the eye: our spiritual perceptions are not quickened, and thus we receive inadequate impressions. Let there then be no impediment to the reception of Divine truth and the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Let all pride, selfishness, and evil desire be purged away, that we may be led by the blessed Spirit into all truth, and be able to discern our excellent privileges and blessings; and thus be enspirited to grasp them.

These counsels were exactly suitable to the persons to whom they were directed ; and there are numbers in our times who need them, and who ought to derive important advantages from them.

Howsoever far a person may depart from Christ, yet He hates putting away, and uses means to bring the wanderer back, as we shall perceive by the sequel. Let us hear what the Spirit says to this church, and arouse ourselves, that we may become truly rich, and prosperous. Amen.



## DISCOURSE X.—THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA.

A SPECIAL EFFORT PUT FORTH TO AROUSE THEM FROM THEIR  
AWFUL STATE OF INDIFFERENCE.

REV. III. 20.—“ *Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*”

HAVING, in the last discourse, described the sad state of the Laodicean church, we now come to notice the special effort to arouse them from that dormant condition.

In the conduct of arguments, sometimes a cause is put after an effect, and then it assigns the reason for the production of the effect. This is the case in this Epistle: Christ calls upon the Laodiceans to manifest zeal and repentance, and proceeds to show the means he will employ to bring them to that state. But we may, with propriety, reverse that order, and first consider the cause.

The Divine Being is benevolent, and would not have any perish. He asks the children of men, “Why will ye die?” He is determined they shall not perish for the lack of means on his part to arouse them. The text notices a special effort to arouse the Laodiceans from that lethargic condition into which they had sunk. Those whom he loves, he rebukes, and chastens: “O! Ephraim, how shall I give thee up! I will make a powerful effort for thy salvation. I will take up my position against



the door of thy heart, and will knock by suitable means, that I may again have admittance granted me. I now rebuke thee, and will proceed to chasten thee.”

But the perverseness and recklessness of wicked man is utterly beyond all imagination. We are entirely at a loss to designate his conduct ; it is a hopeless case, to find terms by which to express his true character. A great philosopher, in attempting comprehensive classification, places the entire series of all that may be affirmed, or denied of a thing, in ten catagories ; but it is doubtful whether we can place the incorrigibly wicked in any classification where there is any thing analogous to his case. There are certain attributes that qualify certain cases which excite intense interest ; such as a splendid course of success—a struggling against almost insuperable difficulties—a voluntary submission to inconveniences and suffering for the good of others. But many things may be said of human beings which may excite our utmost attention, which are nevertheless deeply mysterious. There is a class of human beings of whom we must affirm incredible things ; they voluntarily and resolutely refuse good, yea, even of the highest consideration—crowns dignities, and rich possessions. They are miserable, yet they refuse happiness. They are offered the most surpassing riches, and yet content themselves with abject poverty, and seize greedily upon trifles. They spurn the highest honors, and cling to infamy. They refuse a residence in a palace of light and glory, for the purpose of a lodgment in a densely

dark dungeon: and instead of the most soothing repose, they rush upon racks and gibbets. Perhaps you exclaim, "Impossible!" I reply, "Thou art the man!" Thou who art resisting all the overtures of salvation, and art forcing thy way to endless misery. Suppose a being from a portion of God's fair creation, an utter stranger to man's mysterious history, beholding and commiserating his sufferings in eternity, should interrogate him on the subject in the following manner—"How is it that the God of goodness has doomed thee to this misery?" "It was my own choice!" "But, perhaps, thou wast ignorant of the nature of the good thou didst reject, and of the evil thou didst choose?" "By no means. The Sovereign of earth and heaven, sent to our race, information concerning it: he warned us of our folly; and raised up an order of men to impress it upon us, who spent their whole lives in intreating us to consider it, and often with weeping!" "Why then this unaccountable conduct?" "We choose a present good in preference!" "Then, perhaps, the pleasure and joy it produced was so intense as to balance your present suffering?" "No! our mirth was sadness; our laughter was madness; our good was vexation; in short, our pursuits were vanity!" Astonishment checks all further inquiry. He retires exclaiming, "Oh! fools that ye were; ye sons of Adam, why were ye not wise!"

The Infinite Majesty of heaven is knocking at the door of our hearts for admittance, presenting the choicest good; and, to the present moment, has been refused: and we cannot but ask, in the language of

the wise man, "Ye fools when will ye be wise?"

The meaning of this passage is plain. It presents the Redeemer suing for admittance into his own temple, the heart of man. We will notice,

I. THE ATTITUDE. "I stand."

The human heart is his rightful habitation. It was designed to be his temple, where he intended to reside, and to display his glory; "I will dwell in you, and walk in you: and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people."

The attitude denotes,

1st. Temporary effort.

*I stand*—not *sit*. A standing posture is not a permanent posture: it is only temporary. One who refuses a seat, and only stands, may soon depart. The spouse, after repeated importunity, at last opened the door, but found her beloved had withdrawn. To day, just now, if ye hear his voice and signal, open the door.

2nd. His love and compassion.

Love brought the Saviour from the skies, and from his Father's bosom; love brought him down to the stable and the manger: love caused him to suffer and to die. In his love and in his pity he redeemed us, and love causes him to stand and to knock.

It is one trait in the character of our High-Priest, that he has compassion on the ignorant and on the wanderers.

3rd. His condescension.

Christ truly performs an act of condescension, which is to descend to things below us so as to be associated, and to mingle with them. Thus Christ

stoops to the meanest individual, and seeks his society. He whom angels adore, who receives the praises of eternity, who is equal with God the Father : He by whom all things originated, and who upholds all things by the word of his power, solicits the abject creature to grant him admittance, and stands knocking, as an humble suppliant to gain attention to his request. This is unprecedented condescension. Would an offended earthly prince stand knocking at a rebel's door, to request a reconciliation ? Would a judge sink at the criminal's feet, and beseech him to accept a pardon ? Would a creditor intreat of a ruined debtor to accept of an acquittance ? Such occurrences are yet to be realized ; but even if realized, they would be but feeble types of the conduct of our glorious Redeemer in his amazing condescension.

4th. His patience and long suffering.

He stands—he is not in fitful and impatient motion. What a wonder he should linger. To make one transient visit and to put forth one appeal, would be a mark of great love and pity ; but he stands until his head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. Thousands of appeals have been refused and repulsed in the rudest manner, still he stands : still makes efforts for admittance ! Do not his patience and long suffering appear remarkably conspicuous ?

5th. Earnestness and importunity.

How intent is the Saviour upon saving the soul ! How many and how great are the efforts he makes to effect it ! Instance among other evidences,

1. He stands and weeps.

Weeping he exclaims, "If thou didst but know, at least in this day of favorable opportunity, the things which make for thy peace, thou wouldst open the door, and my Father and I would make our abode with him." The Redeemer weeping—what a crowd of ideas it suggests! It intimates the greatness of the sinner's danger, and the inexpressible misery to which he is exposed—His willingness to save him from his misery—His regret at his obstinacy—His sympathy and sorrow in anticipation of the fearful result. "Alas for thee, Chorazin! Alas for thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." (Matt. xi. 21-24.) The blessed Redeemer weeps not for himself, but for others. Even when proceeding to crucifixion, he desired not tears and sympathy with his sufferings, but desired his sympathizing attendants to weep for themselves, and for their children, who were to suffer such unparalleled evils.

2. He stands, entreating and expostulating.

What arguments he uses, and with what pathos

he urges them. It is the voice of thy beloved that knocketh, saying, open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I bring you incalculable blessings. I will save you from ruin. Shall I depart without entrance, and remove all my blessings with me? Why are you so bent on destruction? why will ye die?

3. He stands and knocks.

This we shall particularly describe in attending to the next consideration.

II. THE ACTION. He knocks.

It is well understood this is figurative language, and that by it is intimated the means he takes in promoting our salvation. He makes an impression on the soul of his wish to take possession of our hearts. He gives some signal to awaken attention. This action, therefore, implies the use of means to accomplish a given purpose. These means he has ever ready for use.

1st. He knocks by the hammer of his word.

“Is not my word a fire, and a hammer, saith the Lord.” This hammer he puts into the hands of his ministers, and with it they often sound a loud alarm. Are they sometimes too plain and pointed--too urgent and rough? Suppose you were standing at the door of a friend, and had just discovered that the house was in flames, and that the family were sound asleep and utterly unconscious of the danger, what would you do? Would you give a very gentle tap at the door? Surely not; but with vehemence and force you would give a thundering appeal, which would

vibrate through every corner of the dwelling. Excuse us if we knock rudely. The word is profitable for reproof and correction ; we must sharply reprove the sinner, and correct his evil ways. Awake thou that sleepest ; hell is enkindled around thee ; another step, perhaps, and thou art damned ; another breath, perhaps, and thou wilt begin endless wailings.

2nd. He tries mercies.

Mercies demonstrate God's goodness, and show how worthy he is of our love and service ; they ought to soften the heart, and lead to repentance and devotedness to God. This is God's design in bestowing them. He would never use harsh means if those of a mild character were efficacious. But if not, then ;

3rd. He inflicts judgments.

He employs penal or afflictive evil. He is intent on our salvation by some means. If we are not softened by mercies, or not melted by love : if goodness lead us not to repentance, then we cannot be surprised if judgments should follow. Can you be surprised if you have stroke upon stroke ? God takes away the desire of your eyes—the wife of your bosom—but no repentance ! Then the darling child is torn from your embrace. Still no repentance, but, on the contrary, hard thoughts of God ! Then, by some dispensation of providence you are stripped of your wealth and property ; or laid upon a bed of sickness, and you are visited with strong pain, and are brought to the gate of death itself. Happy if, under these circumstances, you do not utter hard speeches, but turn to him who smiteth you.

Even all this severe discipline would be better than to be suffered to go down quick into hell.

God knocks, and calls, and has long been doing so. Do you hear his voice? Will not these means excite attention? although many resist, yet many an obdurate heart has been subdued by methods of this nature. The experience of many of God's people, when uttered, commences with this acknowledgment, "I was chosen in the furnace of affliction."

But, alas, these efforts often prove ineffectual, and many, after all, remain impenitent! and thus after their hard and impenitent heart treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. It is a lamentable fact, that some will not be alarmed until actually they fall into hell. This remark will introduce us to our next observation.

### III. THE IMPLIED REFUSAL OF ADMITTANCE.

The door is shut and secured. "If any man open the door." The impenitent sinner keeps the Lord of glory knocking, and does not open the door. What is it that excludes him? The door is barred;

#### 1st. By ignorance.

This was evidently the case with the Laodiceans as the former part of our Lord's address positively declares. They affirmed they needed nothing, and, therefore, sought for nothing. Poverty of spirit alone leads to mourning and seeking. He that is wilfully and resolutely ignorant of his destitution, want and danger, will never make application to the Saviour for relief.

#### 2nd. By prejudice.



The powerful effect of prejudice in influencing the mind, and in preventing a right judgment, is well known. The veil is on the heart, and, therefore, there is a feeling of repugnance and antipathy against religion, which results in a violent opposition to it. The door is not only kept closed, but a cry is issued of, "away with him," "or, depart from us: we do not desire the knowledge of thy ways."

3rd. By pride and self will.

The pride of the human heart is such that it is ever looking for distinction and honor: and the proud think they will lose all esteem, rank, honor, and station, if they become earnest Christians. In the days of our Lord many believed in Christ, that is, they saw his claims to the Messiahship were well established; but did not confess him for fear of the Pharisees, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, and consequently they resolved against being the disciples of Christ. Ah! here is the point; the fashionable will not invite you to their assemblies—their feasts! And you love the praise of men more than the praise of God. You cannot endure it—so you refuse the Saviour, and bow in submission to your fellow mortal. If it were known that Christ came in at your door, or if you were heard to pray to him, the fashionable part of society would never acknowledge you.

4th. By carnality and the love of the world.

This is a stubborn hindrance. This Achan in the camp has often made Israel turn back in the day of battle. The world is a fit object for a carnal mind

which hates God and all godliness. Ye cannot serve two masters—God and Mammon. You will, and must, hold to one and reject the other. If you worship Mammon, Christ will be excluded.

5th. By self-righteousness.

The Scribes and Pharisees rejected the counsel of God against themselves; they justified themselves, and did not see their need of being justified by Christ. The Pharisee went from the temple without approaching, or appealing to Christ, and went home without justification. They that be whole need not a physician, but only they that be sick. The sick will say, come Lord and heal me: the whole, or self-righteous will reject him.

6th. By unbelief.

Every sinner is an unbeliever. Sinners do not believe the danger of rejecting Christ, nor the blessedness of receiving him. While Christ is weeping, because they are standing on the pivot of destruction, they are full of hilarity, mirth, and enjoyment. Alas! they will not believe how near they may be to destruction. Did they really believe all this they would flee to Christ and gladly accept his proffered salvation.

Any one of the above mentioned evils interposing, or all of them together, serve as bars to the door of the heart, and the deluded transgressor refuses entrance to the waiting Saviour.

If Christ ever does enter, we must open the door; he does not force an entrance. Religion, and the service of God is a free will offering; we are soli-

cited and persuaded, and have motives presented to induce us, but we are not coerced.

Opening the door is the result of hearing his voice, or otherwise attending to his request and demand, by means of bestowing a due regard to his word, providences, and spirit. The soul must pay attention. In the theory of perception, it is held that if the mind do not attend to even an audible voice, we receive no impression: and it is so in spiritual perception; we must hear the voice of Christ, the soul must be all attention; and on hearing we must yield to the request and open the door; we must remove those bars. We must make prejudice, pride, carnality, love of the world, and unbelief, give way; and when Christ knocks we must open to him immediately, saying, "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, open to me my love; behold he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice; I will open to him, and admit him with alacrity. Make haste my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices." Happy are they who thus open to him, who is altogether lovely.

But this shall lead us to notice,

#### IV. THE BLESSINGS RESULTING FROM A COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUEST.

He will come into the heart, and take up his abode there; and then ensues,

1st. A divine feast.

"I will sup with him." Observe the import of this figurative promise. The principle meal was at supper time. Their feasts were generally a supper,

not a dinner ; hence Christ emphatically promises to specially feed—to splendidly entertain those who open the heart to receive him. He brings his provisions with him. He will refresh with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit—the wine, and milk, and honey of Gospel grace : to make believers partakers of all the benefits of his death and passion. He will bestow whatever is good, safe, honorable, and happy, as far as is consistent with our real advantage. There is also conveyed the idea of delightful fellowship with Christ. None but friends can associate at a feast—and none but those with whom there can be the kindest familiarity.

“Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”—“Lord how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world.”

2nd. But all the intercourse and enjoyment will not be in this world. The believer shall finally dwell with him above, and feast with him at his table there—“He with me.” What a feast will that be ! Human language cannot describe it. The conscious experience of the believer, who has fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, affords a rich foretaste of the royal banquet. But the inheritance will exceed the earnest. “We know not what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” The feast will surpass all mere human notions of grandeur and munificence, and the capacities of the guests will be so refined and exalted as to be for ever susceptible of increasing and perennial en-

joyment. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled."

Let me unite my voice with that of Christ, and call upon you to open the door. He stands knocking at the door, and by me, as an instrument, he is knocking to-day. Oh! admit your Saviour as your Divine guest. Tear away every thing that keeps him out.

Perhaps he has given the last knock, and is just about to depart from the door. Rise up, make haste open the door, and invite him in, before he has quite departed, and your case be rendered hopeless. "Be wise to day, 'tis madness to defer."

## DISCOURSE XI.—THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA.

REMINDED OF A PROOF OF AFFECTION AND EXHORTED TO ZEAL  
AND REPENTANCE.

REV. III. 19.—“*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*”

IN this portion of the address to this church our Lord Jesus Christ urges a true expression of a return to a better state; instead of lukewarm inactivity, he enforces zealous animation. He says, “I have been arousing, by earnest appeals to thy understanding, affections and feelings, because I wish to promote thy welfare; for, “as many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” Regard this my conduct and dealing as an evidence of my desire to promote thy welfare, and arouse thyself from thy lethargy: “Be zealous and repent.” Let your hearts be enflamed by love, and manifest true zeal.”

We shall be under no necessity to exercise our imagination in picturing an ideal character to answer the description of a languishing professor—the reality will readily present itself: neither need we wander far in search of such a character, for the Laodiceans were not the sole representatives of depreciated religious feeling; but the type of a class which but too frequently exemplifies it in the present times. They are but too prevalent every where; perhaps we need look no farther than into our own hearts, and we may find the monster lurking there. All

therefore, that can be said on this case is applicable to us.

We have here two duties enjoined upon us—repentance and zeal. Repentance, because there is some matter for regret ; and zeal, because we have declined in fervor. Zeal is to precede repentance—to be in repentance—to be continued after reconciliation is effected. It is proper to notice repentance prior to permanent zeal.

A true Christian will always feel the spirit of repentance : he will always be sorry for having sinned against God. And there are many who make new work for repentance after having believed.

We shall have no occasion, in this place, to consider repentance in its abstract nature, or in its general application ; but as specially applicable to all cases similar to the state of the Laodiceans.

To all such we say, repent of the *fact* that ever you relapsed into the state of lukewarmness. Holy shame should cover us. We ought to reflect how different are the feelings we possess to those we ought to have cherished, considering the holy solemnities with which we have been conversant.—We should consider what we might have been, and what good we might have done. Let true sorrow have its due operation : sorrow for having, on our own account, deprived ourselves of so many privileges and rich manifestations of grace ; and for having robbed God himself of his rightful service in us. Review the steps that led to this sad state, and abhor each one ; and then seek a melting, affecting, strong desire to realize the state you have lost. “ Oh ! that

I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me ; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness." Firmly resolve upon a different course. The exhortation is, " be zealous."

This part of our Lord's advice we shall consider more at large, therefore, let us notice,

#### I. ITS NATURE.

The religion of Jesus Christ calls for the entire vehemence of the soul, and for a calm moderation in worldly things. " No man can serve two masters," and especially when these two are God and Mammon. They are opposite to each other, and they are each absorbing : whichever receives the most devoted attention will soon absorb all the affections and feelings. We must pursue the world, as far as necessary, without undue affection ; and the things of God with our entire, undivided soul, or else we shall not serve God at all. If God is to be our master, the world must have no control over us.

In the advice our Lord Jesus Christ recommends to the Laodiceans a state of affection and feeling to be attained which is the entire counterpart of the one into which they had unhappily lapsed.

The original word in the New Testament, in its primary import, signifies *heat*, such as the heat of boiling water ; figuratively, applied to our affective constitution, it signifies any warm emotion, or affection, which moves the mind. Thus, in the Hebrew language, with different constructions, it stands for jealousy of a rival (Gen. xxx. 1 ; ) jealousy in matrimonial life (Numb. v. 14 ; ) to be envious of a



person (Gen. xxxvii. 11; xxvi. 14; Psa. cvi. 16;) so also in the original of Acts v. 17; anger and indignation (Prov. iii. 31; vehement desire. The root of the word in Hebrew signifies jealousy, which is the injured feelings of slighted love and affection, tinged more or less with revenge. True zeal is marked by a resentful feeling of dislike to every thing which stands in the way of the interests of God and his cause, and the warmth, ardor, and activity of exertion in promoting them.

It is a mixed passion composed of grief, anger, fervent love, and desire. Under different circumstances these are variously combined. What a man loves he desires to see honored, and is grieved to see dishonored.

The essential meaning of the word, freed from these varieties of construction, is fervor, intensity, earnestness, and ardour.

Zeal is not a particular grace, but a qualification which is in all, and requisite for the right performance of every duty: no action will be acceptable to God without it.

Bearing in mind the above particulars, we may say, zeal is an intense emotion for or against any thing, stirring up the whole soul in vehement desire, and promoting a vigorous action to accomplish any object deemed of importance, which we desire to see accomplished.

Any of our passions being moved by a religious feeling, either for any thing good, or against any thing evil, is termed *religious zeal*; but to come properly under the denomination of religious, it must

be strongly mixed with charity or love. There may be a small degree of love without zeal. It requires love in a high degree to constitute zeal, for true religious zeal is no other than the flame of love for God's honor and glory, and a warm concern for the welfare of our own souls, and for the souls of others. The truly zealous, love God sincerely, their brethren fervently, and wish to spend and to be spent in the cause of God.

Zeal may be either *true* or *false*. True religious zeal is a good thing; of this no one can doubt. It is good in every other thing, especially when difficulties are to be surmounted; and religion is more important than any other thing. In religious matters we cannot be too zealous; yet the most wicked and pernicious fruits spring from a false zeal.

In order to avoid these deadly fruits, it is of great importance so to characterize true zeal as to distinguish it from its counterfeits; especially since in our times there is an apparently considerable zeal manifested in various directions, which, when narrowly scrutinized, does not turn out to be genuine. In order to avoid let us first detect.

It will be readily admitted that true zeal is opposed to a neutral, careless and lukewarm spirit in religion, such as the Laodiceans are charged with, and which Christ detests. He recommends *zeal*. It is His special aim in his address. In our remarks we do not guard it against its counterfeits, but merely against its opposites; and this is important; yet we cannot judge of zeal merely by warmth and activity. Let us then proceed to discriminate,

1st. True zeal has a *right emotion* by which it is stirred.

Anger and love may be its ingredients at one time, and pity and love at another time ; but love must always be its amalgamating principle. Love is the principal emotion by which it is originated. There may be a zeal stirred by emotions in which love has no part. Passion and prejudice, combined with superstition, result in fanaticism, which is carried out with a hot, mad zeal ; full of pride, unreasonableness, intolerance and persecution. We have many painful instances of a zeal of this kind ; such was possessed by the Apostle St. Paul, before his conversion, and by the Pharisees generally. “ Concerning zeal,” says he, “ persecuting the church.” Pagans, Mahomedans, spurious Christians, or any other class of men, may be actuated by it. The Pharisees encompassed sea and land to make one proselyte, but not out of love for his soul, for they made him tenfold more the child of hell than before. This zeal has kindled the fires of persecution. A man may possess apparent extraordinary vigor, by partaking of some stimulating potion, or by burning fever ; yet this is not true natural vigor ; it is a mere delirium, which is but evanescent ; it will evaporate, and leave its subject weaker than before, if it do not become utterly deleterious, and end in destruction. This is a true illustration of false zeal. Many despisers of warm and fervent religion endeavor to bring it into disgrace by confounding zeal with fanaticism ; but the two are clearly distinct. And we ought to have our souls stirred

to their inmost depths by a proper zeal for God, his cause, and our own soul's happiness.

2nd. True zeal must have a *right object*, on which it is exercised.

It sometimes spends itself for opinions in religion only ; or for a part of religion, and not for the whole ; or in the use of means which religion does not sanction ; or, again, for forms and ceremonies, which are not essential, and not commanded in holy writ. The Jews had a warm zeal for the ceremonial law, to which was appended the numerous acquisitions of tradition. Such was that zeal without knowledge, of which the Apostle speaks, as applicable to the Jews (Rom. x. 2.) A proper knowledge would discover the fitness of the object, and whether it was right or wrong. We certainly ought to have a knowledge of the cause for which we are zealous.

It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing ; that is, it is important to have a good object to which we direct our efforts, and then to be zealously affected towards it, so as to pursue it with vigor.

We should, however, be quite sure that the object in which we propose to engage is good. Joshua asked Moses to forbid the seventy inspired men to prophesy, because they did it not in such order as he judged proper ; but Moses replied, " Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them," (Numb. xi. 29.) The disciples of our Lord saw some casting out devils in Christ's name, and they forbid them, because they appeared not to follow Christ in a particular

order ; but Jesus replied, forbid them not, for they cannot be against us. And there are many persons who cannot bear to see any pursue even a right object, if they do not concur with themselves in every punctilio in carrying it out. Often times there is much zeal spent and wasted on objects which are not good. Would to God it were spent on objects of real utility. Wherever we see persons having an excellent object in view, and are zealous in pursuing it, we ought to respect them, and bid them God speed.

3rd. True zeal must be directed to a *right end*.

The end we ought always to aim at is the glory of God, and the happiness of man. True zeal does not act ostentatiously to catch the eye of man ; but as under the all-searching eye of God. The object might be good, but the end we propose to subserve might not be right ; we may do a good thing, but it may be sin to us, because our eye is not single to the glory of God ; we might have in view our own personal honor, or the glory of a sect. There were some who zealously preached the Gospel with no other end in view but to increase the Apostles' afflictions. "Whatsoever ye do, do it unto the Lord —Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do ; do it to the glory of God."

4th. True zeal must be carried out in a *right spirit and manner*.

We should ever consider for what purpose it is exercised, and under whose inspection ; then true humility and meekness, with patient endurance, will characterize it. When it is mingled with

pride and an irascible temper, it will be reprov'd by him who said, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up!" When the Samaritans did not receive our Lord, the Apostles were so incensed against them that, in their warmth of feeling, they requested him that they might call fire from heaven to consume them as Elias did; our Lord rebuked them by telling them they knew not what manner of spirit they were of. True zeal will neither be hasty nor sanguinary; it will have that charity which suffereth long, and still is kind. A wrong spirit, in an ardent course of action, is exemplified in the conduct of Jehu: He drove furiously; he said, come see my zeal for the Lord. But his heart was not right with God; self was predominant; affectation was plainly discernable, at the same time also, indifference to the true object of his mission was but too manifest.

5th. Zeal, to prove itself genuine, must not be *temporary*.

"It is good to be zealously affected *always* in a good thing." It should not be a meteor which blazes brilliantly for a time, but soon expires, or like a vivid flash of lightening, which, with its sudden glare, penetrates into the most intricate nooks, but immediately leaves all still darker: but like a standing pillar of fire, enlightening the camp at all seasons. The lamps in the tabernacle were never to go out, but ever to be kept burning, fed incessantly with fresh oil, an emblem of the Christian's zeal, fed by love. St. Paul was instant in season, and out of season. Permit me to ask, are you zealous?

Have you the cause of God at heart? Do you feel a strong desire to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of your fellow men? Do you toil at this object with becoming assiduity?

Let your zeal be of the genuine kind; and exercise it incessantly.—Consider,

## II. THE OBJECTS OF ZEAL.

We have said that a right object characterizes true zeal. But the objects require a more particular consideration.

1st. They regard ourselves.

1. True zeal will first show itself here; else we shall have to lament, “they have made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.” That zeal is worth nothing which does not evince a primary and strong desire after inward personal holiness; and to have every action acceptable to God. It is easy to make a great noise and pretense, but does our zeal begin at home in our own heart; if not it is abominable in the eyes of God. But if the root of the matter be in the heart the possessor will be anxious to acquire additional degrees of information, conviction, and impression of God’s will concerning him.

A true Christian desires to do the will of God, he ever prays, what I know not, that do thou teach me. He desires to have his duty made clear to his mind. The Apostle prayed for the Ephesians that God would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; and that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened they might know and appreciate their great privileges and

destination. For the Philippians he prayed that they might abound in knowledge, so that they might approve things that are excellent. And prayers of a similar character are interspersed throughout the scriptures. The person who feels the importance of the subject will himself fervently pray for this blessing.

2. Each one will be anxious to acquire additional strength and power to perform what he discovers to be duty. His zeal will lead him to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, and to grow in grace. He will be deeply anxious to let his light shine before men that they seeing his good works may glorify his Father in heaven; and that, by this means, he may not hurt or hinder others. And then that he may have strength successfully to exert himself in actual objects of specific usefulness.

2nd. They extend to others.

They require us to use every effort we can devise to do good to the souls and bodies of our fellow men, especially to win souls to Christ. True zeal will prompt a real Christian to give his all—ease, honor, pleasure, wealth, life, and all he has. He will say:

“My life, my blood I here present,  
If for thy truth they may be spent.”

No good man wishes to go to heaven alone. That zeal is false which does not begin with the regulation of our own hearts, but that is illiberal zeal which stops where it begins; it will extend through the whole sphere of its possessor's influence. If we do truly wish others to go with us to the heavenly Canaan, we shall use effort to induce them to do so.



Knowing the terrors of the Lord we shall endeavor to persuade men. Being constrained by the love of Christ, we shall strive by a divine impulse to make dead men live. We shall use all the arguments we are masters of to pluck the brands from the burning. It is now my duty,

III. TO ENFORCE THE EXHORTATION BY ARGUMENTS ADAPTED TO THE CASE.

1st. The claims God has upon our most earnest and active services *require* it.

He has a claim upon our *gratitude* and *obedience*.

Consider what he has done for us; he has made us what we are. The members of our bodies, the powers and faculties of our souls, are adapted to afford pleasure and happiness. He has granted, and preserved us in, life; and in such circumstances as are calculated to render life felicitous. He has given us his Son to become our Redeemer, so as to put within our reach eternal happiness. He has provided ample instructions, abounding grace, and efficient influence, to afford us assistance in securing eternal blessedness. We ought to respond to all that Christ does for our benefit. Because I chasten, be zealous *therefore* and repent. He makes a demand upon us for earnestness. He frequently calls for entire and fervent devotedness. The slothful professor, as far as he is concerned, frustrates the whole design of the Gospel.

By these obligations God has a right to demand our zealous services. The "mercies of God" ought to excite a fervent zeal in every heart.

2nd. Our circumstances *demand* it.

Surrounded as we are by enemies, if we would live safely, and conquer them, we must be vigilant and active in our efforts against them; and hence immediately follows the text, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne."

3rd. The immortality of our nature *urges* it.

We shall have an eternity of either happiness or misery; surely then it behooves us zealously to seek the welfare of our souls. And if our souls are precious, equally so are the souls of others. Sinners are perishing daily: they will soon be out of our reach. Instantly seize them in the arms of faith, prayer and effort. What glory and happiness immortal souls are capable of! I could wish, said the Apostle, that myself were accursed from Christ for their sakes. Forgive their sin, said Moses, and if not blot me from thy book.

4th. Example *enforces* it.

With what earnestness men work out their own damnation, drawing iniquity with cords of vanity and sin as with a cart rope! "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light,"—they act more zealously. Should not this stimulate us? To gain an earthly inheritance they rise early, late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness. Should not we to gain a heavenly inheritance be more earnest than they? Ought they to surpass us? The disciples, when witnessing the untiring efforts of their Lord, were reminded of what was written of him, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Should not we co-operate with him? Does he not say, "Take up thy cross and follow me?"

There is a bright cloud of witnesses among the eminent saints. In addition to other ancient worthies hear the Apostle exclaim, "I count not my life dear to me, if I may finish my course with joy." Witness a Fletcher dying daily, and sinking into the will of God, and soaring into all the heights of seraphic love. A Wesley spending his whole life, time, talents, and property, in promoting God's cause. Such instances crowd upon us. What unfeigned piety! What prodigious labours! Will not our supineness be put to the blush?

5th. Another cogent reason for the exercise of fervent zeal for Christ is, we can never do too much. We cannot be righteous overmuch. If we were in danger of exceeding what is strictly proper, in concern and effort, then we might fear. To witness the careful adjustment of effort, which most men exercise, one might think the Scriptures were full of cautions against zeal. But after all we can do, we are only unprofitable servants; Christians, when dying, have never lamented that they had done too much, but always that they had done too little. Can we be exalted too highly in heaven? Is it possible our crown can be too brilliant?

1. Have we been in earnest for our own souls; to

"Deeper sink, and higher rise,  
And to perfection grow."

2. Have we lost any degree of that fervor we once possessed. Let us remember from whence we are fallen—be zealous, therefore, and repent; such declension is aggravating to God. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." God

would have us urge on to perfection. "Wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."



## DISCOURSE XII.—THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA.

ENCOURAGED TO REPENT AND TO BE ZEALOUS BY A STATEMENT  
OF THE BLESSED CONSEQUENCES OF CONQUERING EFFORT.

REV. III. 21, 22.—“ *To him that overcometh 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 him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches.*”

RESPECTING the Laodicean church, we have already observed the low state to which they had, by their unfaithfulness, been reduced—a state awful to contemplate, and much more so to participate in. The compassionate and condescending measures carried out for their recovery, in which our Lord shows his deep anxiety that they should live.—A true and proper state of feeling and disposition enforced upon them, by which again we see outbeaming the glorious rays of his love.—We now come to consider the inducements offered to a zealous repentance and perseverance in the ways of godliness, by an examination of the blessed results of such conduct.

When any enterprize is proposed to a person, the almost invariable inquiry is, what is the compensation? Will it be an adequate remuneration? All kinds of labor bring a suitable reward or compensation. Every promise of payment is for value received; and it would be unlawful to claim it otherwise. We do nothing for God without a reward; and God will not reward without previous

labor. When the great spiritual contest is proposed, if you ask what is the recompense? it is here stated, he that overcometh shall be enthroned.

There is an equivalent between ordinary labor, and the wages, or the compensation: but in this case it is entirely and radically different. The reward is a gift—a grant; it is through grace, or favor, for we cannot claim it as a matter of right. It utterly surpasses the labor. We work, but although it be *for* grace, yet it is always *through* grace; and the reward is all of grace. Christ is the Benefactor: he purchased every blessing for us. In him all fullness dwells; he received gifts for men as the result of his passion and death.

Let us distinctly notice,

#### I. THE VICTOR.

“He that overcometh”—that gaineth the victory. The phrase, “he that overcometh,” is addressed to each of the seven churches. This is a plain intimation that difficulties and oppositions are not peculiar to any one state, but common to all. The repetition of the phrase shows the importance Christ attached to it. We ought, therefore, to give earnest heed to the oft repeated notice. God will not save us by miracle. He will not save us without our own concurrence. There must be a conflict and resistance of our adversaries. He has determined to call us into action, to engage us in warfare. Some Christians appear to get to heaven with far less difficulty than others; they appear to have no great trials or hardships or oppositions; while, on the other hand, many are severely tried, afflicted and distressed, all

the way through. One stroke follows close upon another. Trials and sufferings are said to purify. If a professing Christian will not go directly and earnestly to the blood of Christ to be purified, he is frequently cast into the furnace; and affliction will eventually bring him to Christ for purification. Some have sore troubles to pass through at one period of their lives; and if they are faithful under the trial, then, ever after all is calm tranquility. We may instance in the cases of Job, Abraham, and others. But all have something of trial, at one time or another. The Christian life is a warfare. In this point of view it is frequently considered. The epithets employed indicate actual contest, and assure us of many opponents. Let us examine a little more closely these contests.

1st. There is a contest between flesh and spirit.

“We wrestle not,” says the Apostle, “against flesh and blood, but against principalities,” &c. By this statement the Apostle does not deny that there is a struggle against flesh and blood, but that these do not form the only, or the principal opponents; yet we have to wrestle with these opponents, and we must overcome their baneful influence. The spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit. By the term flesh we are to understand our fallen nature, with all its outbreaking of internal corruptions; and by the expression spirit, the soul, the reason and conscience, quickened, purified, and strengthened by the Holy Spirit. The physical and sensuous nature of man is generally in active opposition to the intellectual and spiritual. In the



primitive state of innocence they were in active alliance. He is now prompted by his intellectual and spiritual nature, aided by Divine grace, to seek truth, piety and happiness ; but is constantly opposed by his physical and fallen nature. His understanding dictates to a higher course ; the flesh contradicts. Appetites and passions make a strong demonstration ; and reason struggles for the ascendancy. The appetites of the body crave—the understanding refuses to yield to the sollicitation. Thus, in this lower sense, there is a continual warfare.

And if there is such a continual struggle between our intellectual and physical natures, without any definite aim at actual conversion, much more so when direct transgression of the law of God, and the attainment of a renovated nature, are in question. The sinful body would often captivate all our thoughts, affections, and passions ; but conscience, enlightened and impressed by the Spirit of God, struggles hard to subjugate all these into allegiance to the will of God. Here we have a victory to gain, and it must be gained if we intend to wear the victor's crown.

In a carnal man the flesh triumphs—it constantly gains the victory against a feeble opposition. In the commencement of the real spiritual contest, the awakened sinner feels the almost overwhelming force of his corrupt propensities, and often exclaims, "I cannot do the things that I would. The good that I would, that I do not : the evil that I would not that I do." But, by and bye, faith is brought into exercise. At first he only partially overcomes,

but, as faith grows stronger, his victories are more decisive ; until at length, if faithful, he can join the Apostle in asserting, "I thank God he delivers me by Jesus Christ. I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God."

Mortifications of the flesh, the wasting of the body by fastings, and other external aids, are brought by some as the instruments of the subjugation of our fallen nature ; but if we depend upon anything but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—the power of his grace and spirit—we shall fail in the contest.

2nd. There is spiritual opposition.

We do actually wrestle against principalities and powers, and against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. We wrestle against different orders of spiritual, wicked beings, who occupy the most sublime places ; and who possess amazing power in presenting their temptations to our minds. Satan and his host exercise all their wiles and stratagems ; and are incessantly employed in seducing and bending us under their yoke. Here we have foes which will be difficult to overcome, for they take advantage of all that is evil within us. But to be victors, we must overcome them.

3rd. There is an opposition between truth and error.

The Christians in those days had peculiar trials arising from this source. To be led into error is not barely an intellectual embarrassment, but it has a serious effect upon our moral practice and habits.

Some latitudinarians affect to account all principles of faith as unimportant. They say,

“For forms of faith let restless zealots fight,  
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.”

But opinions do, in fact, influence the practice, and have an especial bearing on our experience. Satan often leads into theoretical error, that he may introduce practical derelictions. The Apostle, knowing this, says, “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.”

The enemies of the Christian are powerful. You often feelingly exclaim, “I shall one day fall under the power of some of these adversaries.” But Christians are supplied with armour for a defence. They are made strong with truth and sincerity, as though girded with a girdle. A Christian soldier puts on the whole armour of God, both offensive and defensive. He fights by faith—fights with the word of God—fights on his knees—fights animated with hope of success—fights and conquers all. God giveth him the victory through Jesus Christ.

Greater is he that is for us than all they that are against us. Many a victory, through his aid, have you already won; and what you have already done you may still do; and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. We must overcome in every separate contest: we must overcome every day, and every enemy who assails us. We must overcome all through life: always going on conquering and to conquer. It is glorious to overcome difficulties; and it is self-humiliating to sink under them. God looks down with approbation on

one contending heartily, and successfully with difficulties. No man can surmise what he can do or suffer until he makes the attempt.

Have high and noble aims. Do not propose a minor object, and say if I can accomplish that, it will be enough. Recognize what others have done, and aim at doing the same. What is possible to be done by any one, we may do also.

The contest requires earnestness. The Apostle says, "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air." The boxer in the Grecian games was trained to skill and agility by practising in feigned combats; but the energies of neither body nor mind were thus fully brought out. He only beat the air; and was by no means in earnest; but in actual combat he found his case entirely different. Then he found it necessary to put forth all his energy, and to exert his utmost power. So the soldier, in some forlorn hope, feels he must conquer or die; and he exerts himself to the utmost extent of his ability. So it is with the Christian; all is at stake; it is for life—for eternal life that he is contending. The result is salvation or damnation; and he finds all the strength which his soul possesses must be brought into requisition. There is a crown to win; you must be in earnest, says the Saviour; you must be aroused from that sluggish, hateful lukewarmness, and have the spirit of zeal infused throughout your whole man in order to win it. And he enforces this sentiment by using every selection of expressive language which denotes perfect activity and energy. We may say to Christians, as the Jewish commanders were di-

rected to address their men when going out to war ; —if any one has not made up his mind to devote entire attention to the contest, and to use his utmost endeavors to conquer, let him not essay to engage in the conflict.

Let us endeavor profitably to consider,

## II. THE VICTOR'S REWARD.

The reward promised, includes regal dignity, kingly power, and imperial glory.

A reward is promised to each of the seven churches ; and the reward in each case has some reference to the condition or circumstances of the church addressed. To the Ephesians who had declined in spiritual life is promised of the Tree of Life. Our first parents, on their declension, were barred from the Tree of Life. This promise means, that on doing their first works, they should regain the privileges they had lost by their backsliding.—To the Smyrnians the promise is, that they should not be hurt of the second death. They had not backsliden, but yet were given to expect tribulation. They are comforted with the assurance that if they overcame, the greatest of all miseries should not befall them.—To the Pargameans the promise is, that they should eat of the hidden manna. They had not been vigilant against false doctrine and evil practice ; but if they finally overcame these errors, and especially if they resisted things sacrificed to idols, they should enjoy true spiritual sustenance. If they would consent to lose their good name and worldly reputation, they should have a new name.—The Thyatirans had weakly suffered Jezebel to usurp

authority ; and the promise is, that if they overcame the snare they should have power over the nations. —The Sardians were dead and defiled ; but to such as overcame, it was promised they should be clothed in white raiment. For loss of temporal honor, they should have honors which are eternal.

The Philadelphians had proved stedfast ; if they continued so to the end, they should be faithfully dealt with ; they should be made pillars in the house of God, and have the badge which should admit them to the New Jerusalem, and be qualified for the enjoyment of it. The Laodiceans were lukewarm, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked ; withal, they were proud and presumptuous ; they thought great things of themselves : but, if they would overcome their indolence, and all other opponents, they should have the highest honors conferred upon them.

It has been remarked that this church was in a worse state than any of the rest ; and yet the highest promises are made to them. Thus the Lord shows his kindness in endeavoring to encourage and save the worst. And, indeed, in every case, when we might have expected nothing but vengeance, if the sinner or backslider repent, God shews mercy in the most munificent manner. And thus we see the reward is not of debt, but of grace.

As rewards, crowns were frequently bestowed ; as for instance to the victors in the Olympic games.

It is worthy of remark that a principal ingredient in the happiness of heaven is very frequently spoken

of as consisting in honor. It is natural for men to seek honor and distinction : all aim at it.

This honor is variously expressed under the terms a crown, a throne, a sceptre, and a kingdom ;—dominion, authority, and power ; occupying Christ's throne ;—and judging the world and angels ; exercising all acts of sovereignty ; and as having power over the nations. The leading idea of all these expressions is regal dignity, power and glory. But are these expressions to be taken literally or figuratively, as expressive of some spiritual distinction ? If only to be understood spiritually, yet the leading idea stands prominent ; and in either sense they may be understood as having partly an accomplishment in this world, and partly in the future state.

1st. Let us endeavor to ascertain their fulfilment in the present state.

Thus our Saviour, addressing his disciples, says, " ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel— (Luke. xxii. 28–30.) Some divines consider the meaning of this passage as applicable to the kingdom of glory ; and regard it as a promise that they, if faithful, should be admitted there, to high dignity and glory. Several other eminent commentators consider it as referring to the Gospel kingdom, and as containing a promise that the disciples should be seated with Christ at his table as guests, and not treated as servants ; that they should have power and

dominion in the new dispensation, and the highest authority in the kingdom of grace ; that they should rule, govern, and make laws therein. If the latter is the sense, which is probable, then his disciples, in the latter day glory, will realize the fulfilment of the passage in a still fuller sense. The Apostle, in reproving the Corinthians for taking judicial cases to Heathen magistrates, instead of deciding their own affairs among themselves, says, Know ye not that ye shall judge the world?—Angels? Do ye not know? They had then some means of acquiring information. That information was afforded them by Daniel (chap. vii. 27.) “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.” This kingdom, Daniel affirms, shall succeed the four great monarchies which should successively rule the civilized earth ; and is well understood to be the kingdom of the Messiah. Some suppose the passage cited from St. Paul as above, signifies that the saints will sit as assessors with Christ at the judgment day ; but the saints will themselves be judged. To judge often signifies to govern or rule. The saints will govern or rule in the world under the Gospel dispensation, but especially so in the brighter and more glorious days of this dispensation, when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ ; then the whole world will be under the sway of righteous men. The martyrs, etc., we are



told, shall rise at the first resurrection, and will live and reign with Christ one thousand years: they, especially, will share in his honors. "If we suffer, we shall reign with him." This is probably the sense of Christ's words, where he says, "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 as I received of my Father."

2nd. Let us notice their application to a future state of reward.

The words will have a higher accomplishment in heaven. In eternal happiness the saints will possess power and glory. As yet we know but little of the actual state of future bliss, and the arrangements of that blessed state. We can but take the terms in which the infinite wisdom of God has been pleased to intimate to us some of the leading outlines, and look to eternity itself for their development. These terms have their analogies, and those analogies give us some indistinct idea of what there may be in the reality. To this future happy state the promise of the text seems specially to belong. We shall partake with Christ of his authority, glory, joy, and exaltation. Let this suffice as a sufficient object of faith, hope, and encouragement.

The Second Adventists refer all such passages to Christ's personal reign upon earth, and the saints reigning with him. This is not the place to discuss the anomalies of the system, and the contradictions it involves. I introduce it for the purpose of noticing an assertion which they have made on this text.

They say there are two thrones here mentioned—the Father's throne and Christ's throne—the throne of David to which he was to succeed. Nothing of the kind appears from the passage itself. What is Christ's throne? Evidently his Father's throne. He sat there before his incarnation; and at his ascension was again admitted there as God-man, the mediator. This is, therefore, the mediatorial throne on which he now sits, and on which he performs separate functions; and he does not refer to an earthly throne to be afterwards erected. On the same throne saints are to be admitted, by which he indicates their elevation to glory and honor; it is true he will not always sit there as mediator, for he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father: but he will sit there under another character, and then he will reward his followers. Some speak of a mediatorial kingdom to be *hereafter* established; but evidently he is *now* mediator.

How astonishing is the consideration of this dignity; in plain terms, we are to be partakers of Christ's dignity. No angel, archangel, cherub, or seraph, partakes of this dignity. They are his servants, his messengers: saints are his brethren, and sharers of his glory.

They will sit, rest, repose after a life of toil. Heaven will be a place of rest, in union with Christ. He overcame, and now reposes: if we overcome, we shall possess supreme bliss, by participating in Christ's honor and repose. Well may we say, with the Apostle, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared

with the glory which shall be revealed.”

Let us then direct our attention to the closing admonition: “He that hath an ear, let him hear.”—This is spoken to every church addressed in these Epistles; and thus its importance is marked. We ought to hear attentively, deliberate on, seriously, and examine ourselves constantly, by what the Spirit so specially addresses to the churches. May God grant that these varied and important lessons may make a right impression on our minds. May he grant unto us the hearing ear and the understanding heart. Amen.

THE  
APOCALYPSE EXPLAINED.

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PART II.



## DISCOURSE I.--INTRODUCTORY.

### THE OPENING VISION INTO THINGS WHICH ARE FUTURE.

REV. iv. v. :—“ After this I looked, and, behold, a door was 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 show thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately 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 jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and 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 out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings 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 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 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 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, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honor 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 throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, 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 thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to 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 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 earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, 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 with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, blessing, and glory, and honor, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

AN insight into futurity is ardently desired by all men. It must entirely originate with God. He alone can reveal future events. To a considerable extent he has been pleased to do so. We have to be thankful to him for every ray of light he is pleased to shed on the obscurity of the future. The writings of the Prophets are truly astonishing, and ought to rivet the attention of men. But this closing book of Holy Scripture is a most wonderful and a most important one. It is the Apocalypse of our Lord Jesus Christ—the Revelation which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass: and this Revelation of Christ was given by him to John his servant, in the Isle of Patmos. It shows us Christ the accomplisher of all God's designs, the conqueror of all the nations of the earth. God here makes known to his church all his purposes respecting it, and the world: (*i.e.*, the

Roman world :) especially so far as they have any bearing on the church, and the prosperity of religion, from the time of St. John's vision (from 95 to 97,) to the consummation of all things. As these Revelations are in relation to the church of Christ, and to the world, I deem it my duty, as a steward of the mysteries of God, to bring before you their contents in the best manner I am able.

In tracing those events there will occur many evangelical lessons—many gracious interferences will be disclosed—many useful admonitions which must be profitable to the pious mind.

The things which *shall be hereafter* (i.e., after the time of St. John's vision,) form the distinct subject. Prior to this he had noticed the things which *are* (i.e., things which existed at that time.) The former chapters treat of these things. I have already discoursed on these chapters. And now we come to the things which were to transpire after that period.

All these Revelations were made to John, for the most part, by scenic representations. The grand outline of the scenery is worthy of being closely studied; and it is likewise necessary in order to understand the whole Book. We are introduced to the *interior of a temple*; undoubtedly the Jewish temple is referred to. In the inmost sanctuary is the throne of Jehovah, and a blessed company surrounding it. All these things are used as emblems, and for the purpose of fixing the relations of the different scenes of the transactions introduced. In connexion with this there is mount Zion, and the holy city. Also in miniature the Roman Empire is spread out before



the Apostle in distinct and graphic delineation. The subjects to be revealed are represented as being written in a Book, or on a Roll. The Book or Roll was closed up with Seals. The Seals being opened, in regular order, develop the whole subject. When we came to the seventh Seal, the subject diverges into seven trumpets; or the seven trumpets include the contents of the seventh Seal. So, likewise, on coming to the seventh trumpet, the subject contained in it is developed by the seven Vials; which last division has some other minor divisions.

The Roll appeared as written within, and without. The parts written *without* appear to be *supplementary* to those *within*. As might easily occur in writing any document, there might arise a necessity for some further enlargement, or something further explanatory. Of such a nature appears the parts written without the Roll.

The parts written *without* appear to be chaps. 12, 13, 14: which are supplemental to chaps. 6, 8, 10, 11. The matter written *within* has a reference to that which is chiefly secular; and that written *without*, to that which is chiefly ecclesiastical. The matter, therefore, written without, is chiefly retrogressional, or, it takes us back again to consider some other circumstances of things which are treated of, by the writing within. Thus we perceive a beautiful uniformity in the order and plan of this marvelous Book.

Having noticed the form and structure of the book, let us proceed to notice,

The nature of the figurative language employed.  
The language is highly emblematical, or hieroglyphic.

phical. We have seals, trumpets, vials : earth, sun, moon, stars : rivers, seas : mountains, deserts : beasts with heads and horns, dragons, locusts, horses : countries, as Judea, Egypt, Babylon : thunderings, lightnings, tempests ; earthquakes. The propriety of these symbols appear in their having a local application. The animals mentioned are indigenous to the places intended. The mountains, rivers, and seas have a geographical propriety in their application. The figure itself refers us to the locality of the scene ; and qualities are pointed out by the emblem employed. By a diligent attention to the nature of any object, and by a comparison with its use in other places, the meaning of any symbol may be ascertained. The propriety of these figures will appear in the places where they occur.

Let us next proceed to the opening vision.

There are several distinct visions in this book. We have already discussed one in connexion with the state of the seven churches. We now come to the second in the series. A similar vision to that was seen by the prophets at the opening of the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel.

A door was opened in heaven, *i.e.*, the symbolic heaven, or the inner temple ; and we are introduced to the throne of God, the elders, the living creature &c.

We have not here a representation of the usual heavenly state, but a symbolization of a special assembly sitting in council for the purpose of passing judgment on the ungodly world.

St. John beheld the God of glory. The rainbow

was round the throne, intimating that God governs mankind in consideration of, and on the terms of a covenant of grace. This influences all his decisions, and directs all his proceedings. He, himself, to look upon, was like a jasper and sardine stone. These specialities are undoubtedly noticed to signify two different attributes of God—the former his holiness—the latter his primitive justice, which would be terrible to his enemies. The rainbow round about the throne intimates that the judgment was to be an act of grace for the church. The rainbow not only denotes grace generally, but grace after wrath; and the entire rainbow was in sight like to an emerald, or of a green color; which denotes the Divine condescension, placability, and forbearance.

Before the the throne were seven lamps of fire, betokening the seven Spirits of God, or, the Holy Spirit in his perfect operations. The seven lamps also, in another place, symbolize the seven churches; or, the church general. One and the same symbol represents both, by which we are assured the Holy Spirit is in, and intimately connected with the church. His influences are felt in the universal church. Instead of looking for exterior marks of a true church, let us examine whether we can discover this internal and infallible sign. Where there is most of the Spirit, there is the fullest proof of a real church.

There were thunderings and lightnings, and voices: these are intimations of judgments. The sounds originate before God, the vibrations are heard on earth. These judgments as manifest in the

changes and revolutions of time, are brought about by God. The Divine mind is the sensorium of the universe. Nothing is done on earth but in, by and through him; and he has an interest and sympathy in all that transpires.

Before the throne, also, there was as a sea of glass, or a glassy sea.

Here there seems to be an allusion to the brazen laver in the Tabernacle and Temple. This was for the purpose of the priests washing themselves; and would thus betoken the necessity of purity in God's service; and especially to stand before him. But this is represented as a sea of glass, clear as crystal, which is an addition to what was said by Moses. It seems to partake of the character of a mirror, or reflector; by which very probably the purity and righteousness of God in judgment is illustrated. Taking this in connexion with chap. xv. 2, where the Apostle says he saw, as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and the victories over the corruptions of the beast, celebrating their victory with harps and singing the song of Moses and the lamb, the idea would seem to be suggested that these faithful persons were celebrating God's judgments upon their oppressors, and their own deliverance, as Moses did. This sea of glass, then, we should say, is significant of God's righteous administration. The idea of a sea represents the immensity and profundity of the Divine rectitude—thy judgments are a great deep—the idea of a mirror represents the illustration or reflection of his righteousness and truth: he will make the whole of his conduct plain,

howsoever intricate it may sometimes appear. Ye troubled souls! look into this glassy mirror, this depth of Divine rectitude! See all things managed by Divine wisdom and goodness, and lose all care, sorrow and pain.

The heavenly company is next to be observed.

In the midst, or partly under the throne so as their form was perceived, for they were thus partly under, the Divine glory resting on the Cherubim; and round about, surrounding the entire area of the throne, were four living creatures; and round about the throne were twenty-four thrones, and upon them twenty-four elders clothed in white raiment, with crowns of gold on their heads.

What is the meaning of these representations?—One thing must be evident; both are representative of the redeemed from among men; for they both joined in the song, “Thou redeemed *us* unto God,” &c. Thus they acknowledge their connexion with humanity, and their participation in redemption.

As to the Elders, they were royal in their state—they had thrones and crowns. They also bear some indications of the sacerdotal character; having vials full of odours, &c. St. Peter calls the saints a royal priesthood; and St. John, at the commencement of these Revelations, says that Christ has made us kings and priests, &c. They seem to represent the universal church of God, in all ages. Not, I believe, is it the fact that the living creatures represent the Jewish, and the elders the Christian church; for they occupy different positions, and have different occupations. To be each representative of a certain

portion of the church, they would have been arranged together, with, perhaps, each bearing some distinguishing mark. But the elders, alone, represent the entire church. The number twenty-four is referred by some to the twelve Patriarchs of the Old Testament church, and to the twelve Apostles of the New. Others think there is a reference to the heads of the twenty-four courses of the Jewish priesthood; and this seems probable, because Christians, as well as pious Jews of former days, form the true Israel of God.

The four living creatures.

As to the living creatures there have been various opinions. I shall not enumerate them, but must proceed to introduce the one I adopt; and which, in fact, I have seen but rarely even alluded to. They are not representations of the Divine Being, for they support the Divine glory, and are engaged in adoring and worshipping him. They are not angelic beings, for they were fallen and sinful,—they had been redeemed. They are obviously identical with the cherubim. The cherubim are noticed several times in Scripture, and especially in the visions of Ezekiel. Figures of them were constructed at God's command by Moses, and placed in the most holy place, and on them rested the glory of God. The cherubim are merely symbolical beings: they are never represented as employed like angels in ministering to the church of God. After much reflection on the subject, I incline to think they symbolize redemption—not redemption in the abstract idea, but in its concrete application—redemption in

energy and operation—man from every quarter of the world redeemed by Christ ; and thus personified by symbols giving life, and form, and identity, and action, to the great fact. The divine glory, as an object of man's contemplation, is thus represented as resting on redemption—a beautiful allusion. These figures, I think, have uniformly this application. After man's fall he was to offer sacrifice before the cherubim. In the Tabernacle and Temple, figures of cherubim were to be erected, and the Divine glory rested upon them, and before them the blood was sprinkled. Plainly the manifestation of the Divine glory is in connexion with redemption. I might still further trace this idea, but what is said will suffice.

The qualities of the redeemed are evidently represented by the living creatures. They were four in number, representing all the quarters of the world ; as they distinctly specify in their doxology of praise. They had each six wings, and were full of eyes. They had different shapes, one that of a lion, the next that of a calf, then that of a man, and lastly that of an eagle, each symbol representing different qualities in the redeemed, or necessary to be possessed by them according to the circumstances in which they might be placed. These several figures are represented as having been emblazoned on the four main standards of God's ancient people, the sacramental host of God's elect. There was a ceaseless offering of adoration and praise, "Holy, holy, holy," &c. The Elders concur in this ascription, by falling prostrate, and casting their crowns

before him. Vast numbers of angels are represented as surrounding the throne and responding also to this acknowledgment. Every creature joins in the expression, and the living creatures add their solemn Amen.

And now the grand drama opens. We have before us the Great Being, the Author of all that exists; the Lamb, the Author of redemption. Here are before the throne the actors in the drama, and all ready for action.

He that sits upon the throne holds in his right hand a book, or roll, full of writing—representing the destinies of the world and of all men as being in his hand, and under his control, but it is sealed! A proclamation is made, by a strong angel, for any one worthy to come forward to open the book, and to loose its seals. You will recollect that when Daniel had disclosures made to him and had written them down in a book he was commanded by an angel to shut up the words, and to seal the book, even to the time of the end, or of their accomplishment. No doubt the germ of all developed in these revelations was contained in the prophecies of Daniel. And probably the same angel now comes forward, and makes this proclamation. No man was found able to open the book.

St. John, in his symbolic character, wept much, because no man was found worthy to open the book. In many of these transactions, it is evident that St. John did appear in a symbolical character. He symbolized the true ministry of the church, and indeed the church itself. His feelings were represen-



tative of those of the church, and what they would have been, had not these disclosures been made. One of the Elders said, "weep not," &c. And he beheld, and lo! stood a lamb as it had been newly slain, in the midst of the throne, having infinite or perfect strength, and perfect discernment. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. He only who redeemed man was fit and proper to develop the proceedings and actions of man in his probationary existence, the progress of his kingdom, the results of combinations against it, and the final destiny of the whole.

Immediately the living creatures, and the Elders—the symbolic representatives of redemption—and the redeemed, prostrate themselves before him, acknowledging him as worthy to perform this great act; and for this main reason—He is the author of redemption.

Hereupon there seems to occur an unusual chorus of praise in a *new song*, uttered, iterated, and responded to by the living creatures, elders, multitudes of angels, and every creature in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, "worthy is the lamb," &c., "Blessing and honor," &c. All this was ended by the solemn Amen of the living creatures, and the prostration of the Elders. All heaven becomes jubilant: every creature exults in the act.

What an important thing, then, are these revelations! There is much interest, joy and thanksgiving upon the development of the contents. They are all spread before us. It is no longer a sealed book: the seals are opened, the matter revealed. It is all

spread before us. I trust we shall feel much interest, and derive much profit, in investigating the contents of this important book.

But let us share in the reverence and prostration represented before us in the conduct of these symbolic characters. Let us adore the Infinite in the communications he has made to us.

What a piece of mechanism does this scenery present! There has never been any thing like it in any human composition!



## DISCOURSE II.

### THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SIX SEALS.

Rev. vi.—“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and 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 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 second seal, heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that 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 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 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 wine. And when he had opened the fourth seal I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come 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 the beasts of the earth. And when he had opened the fifth seal, saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God 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 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 fellow-servants also and their brethren that should be killed as 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 sack-cloth of hair, and the moon became as blood. And the stars fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the 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 earth, and the great men, and the rich man, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains ; And 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 great day of his wrath is come ; and who shall be able to stand ?”

IN the introductory remarks, I have stated that I coincide with the conclusion of Mr. Elliott and others, that the transactions of this vision commence at or about the year 97; and that all which will fall under our observation will be transactions subsequent to that date.

There appears to be six chief parts, or acts, clearly defined by the symbols of this book, agreeing with what is presented from the figures themselves, viz: Seals, Trumpets, and Vials, so also the acts in this drama are six. These are,

I. That of the temporal glory, and then the decline and fall of Pagan Rome—before the power of Christianity—the subject of the six first seals.

II. The desolation of Rome—Christian after its apostacy—of the western empire by the Goths, and of the eastern by the Saracens and Turks—the subject of the first six trumpets.

III. The reformation, about the middle of the sixth trumpet.

IV. The supplemental and explanatory history of the rise and character of the Papacy, and Papal empire which sprang out of the Gothic enundations of the western empire, “written without” of the roll, preparatory to the representation of its final overthrow.

V. The final overthrow of the Papacy and Papal empire, under the outpouring of the vials, and the coming of Christ to judgment.

VI. The glorious consummation.

The first four parts seem to have been already accomplished.

Our present discourse will embrace the first division, as above, viz :

The temporal glory, and the decline and fall of Pagan Rome, before the power of Christianity. This is the subject of the first six seals.

It so happens, that providentially there has been a classic history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, written by an able and learned man, though of an infidel tendency—the history by Gibbon. This writer has so graphically delineated his subject, that he has, though undesignedly, illustrated even the phraseology of the Apocalypse ; so that his work has been considered highly important in showing the fulfilment of the prophecies.

There has been a great diversity of opinions on the import of these seals.

1. They have been thought to refer to the four great empires predicted by Daniel. This is in direct opposition to what was declared to John, “ I will show thee what must be *hereafter*.” There may be, in some places, an illustrative allusion to what is past ; but, with such an assertion, we should not be justified in considering the matter of the revelation itself, as stretching into the past.

2. To four religious systems, the Christian, Mohamedan, Popish, and Infidel. This view would not suit the symbols.

3. Another class of interpreters say that the judgments indicated in the seals fell upon the Jewish people, and were accomplished in the destruction of their city and temple. This involves many con-

traditions, particularly that elicited by the fact that the temple &c., had been previously destroyed.

4. Another class affirm that the seals have not yet been opened. If so then the whole roll is yet sealed; for the opening of the seals is the commencement of the series, and all the rest is consecutive.

5. Some suppose them to be altogether spiritual, or ecclesiastical, as referring to the progress of the Gospel, the dissensions of the Arians and other heresies; the persecutions of real Christians; the reformation, &c. This is called the church scheme of the seals. But this breaks up the regular order of the entire book.

6. Yet another class suppose these seals to prefigure the judgments upon Pagan Rome, and to contain predictions of the conflict between Christianity and Paganism, which ended in the establishment of the former under Constantine.

With this latter class I connect myself. The learned and judicious Mr. Elliott, and some other late writers, have cast such clear light on the subject, that a very wide spread conviction prevails on the truth of their explanation.

Each seal contains the compendium of a distinct prophecy of events and circumstances to be evolved. The chronology of each vision is plain and distinct from the emblems themselves.

Upon the opening of the first four seals, the four living creatures exclaim to John, "come and see;" and "come." In the three last seals the living creatures are not mentioned, and no horse is introduced. But why are the living creatures represented a<sup>s</sup>

having a part in the action? Because they are the representatives of the actual redemption of the whole earth; and there are circumstances to transpire in which man's probationary existence is deeply involved: therefore, they call to John, the symbolical representative of the ministry of the church, to notice these events. Ministers of the Gospel ought to notice every event that has a bearing on man's salvation, or which conduces to his damnation.

Under the first four seals, the symbol is the same—a horse. It refers to Rome, in its Pagan state. Beasts, of different kinds, are elsewhere made symbols of nations. Coins still exist whereon the Roman empire is symbolized by a horse. The horse is a national hieroglyphic of Rome. I need scarcely remind you there are hieroglyphics appropriate to all nations—for instance, the thistle of Scotland, the shamrock of Ireland, the rose of England, the lily of France, &c. The horse was sacred to Mars; and the people of Rome called themselves the people of Mars. The colors of the horses intimate the success of the nation, its stages of prosperity, and its decay. The agents or riders are distinctive of a class.

#### THE FIRST SEAL.

The first seal is opened by the Lamb; and a white horse and his rider appear on the scene, issuing forth, probably upon the Roman landscape, depicted before St. John. He is called upon to notice the occurrence.

Some suppose that the rider is Christ himself going forth to spiritual conquest. Christ is undoubtedly represented in chap. xix upon a white horse.



But there he is differently equipped from this rider. There is nothing similar in the two cases but the horse. And, he there appears at a point of time very distinct from the period alluded to in this place. I have already said the figuration refers to Pagan Rome, and to a state of prosperity, which she enjoyed previous to her decay. The period commences at the death of Domitian A. D. 96., and ends at the accession of Commodus A. D. 180. It proceeds through the reigns of Nerva, Trajan, Adrian, and the two Antonines.

The emblems signify prosperity. The color of the horse—white—indicates a state of prosperity, victory, and expansion, characteristic of the Roman empire during the period to which the first seal alludes. John saw him going on conquering and to conquer signifying wars uniformly triumphant. This is verified by the history of the period referred to. There was almost uninterrupted prosperity under those emperors. We need but read Gibbon, or any other historian, for confirmation of this assertion.

A *crown* was given him. The expression for crown is *stephanos*, not *diademas*. It was a laurel crown. Such a crown was worn until Dioclesian changed it for the diadem. This fact remarkably points to the chronology of the period. An emperor going forth to war was presented by the senate with a crown of laurel. This exactly points out the act mentioned in the text, "a crown was given him."

There has been an objection made to this interpretation on consideration of the rider holding in his hand a bow. It is said, if it signified a Roman em-

peror, it ought to have been a javelin. But farther consideration will show us the exact propriety of the figure. The bow was *Cretan*. How then does it come to be put into the hand of a Roman emperor. The facts of the case are clear and distinctive. All the twelve Cæsars were of old Roman families. After the death of Domitian a remarkable change took place. Nerva was a Cretan; he founded a new dynasty on the imperial throne. All the succeeding five emperors were connected together as one family, inasmuch as each adopted his successor. This, therefore, again remarkably fixes the period, and identifies the Agent; and instead of being really an objection, it is strictly confirmative of the correctness of this interpretation.

#### THE SECOND SEAL.

The Lamb opened the second seal, and a *red* horse and his rider appears on the scene.

The color is that of *war* and *bloodshed*. The wars alluded to were civil wars. Killing one another is language appropriate for civil wars. Power was given to this agent to take (the) peace from the earth, or Roman world. Fifty years of any portion of history cannot present such scenes of killing each other as were realized at this period of Roman history. The Pretorian guards were the agents in these massacres. They murdered nine Roman Emperors in 60 years. Gibbon marks this as a step in the decline of the Roman Empire. He records such a series of civil contests, slaughters, and assassinations as are rarely paralleled in the transactions of any nation.

This period began in A.D. 193, by the assassination of the Emperor Commodus, and continued almost uninterruptedly to the defeat and slaughter of the Emperor Philip by Decius A.D. 249. This period is called the *Pretorian* period, because the Pretorian guards were the principal actors in it ; and they invariably made choice of one of their own Prefects to sit on the throne. At the assassination of Commodus, Pertinax, Pretorian Prefect, was elected to the imperial throne.

“ A sword was given to him.” It was the usual custom, on the appointment of any person to the Prefecture, to present him with a sword. The official bearing of a sword, and the right of judicially using it, by the regulations of the senate, belonged to the Pretorian Prefect. He was invested with a power superior to that of the Pro-Consul.

#### THE THIRD SEAL.

“ And when he had opened the third Seal, I beheld, and lo, a *black* horse ; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.” Some suppose that this indicates a state of famine, and have objected to the mode of interpretation here pursued, as there was no absolute famine at the time referred to. But this is but a partial view of the subject. Food was then undoubtedly high ; yet not so much from scarcity as from injudicious regulations. “ A measure of wheat for a penny ”—a *chenix* for a *denarius*. A *chenix* was the fourth part of a Roman peck, which would advance the price to 10s. per bushel. This is said to have been the ordinary price of wheat in the current times. A measure is stated by Suidas

to be the ordinary daily support of a man. A denarius was the usual day's wages. But the figure does not denote famine, but oppression and exaction. The balances denote justice, and indicate the necessity of the Prefect doing justice. It will be observed that the warning voice comes from the living creature to the rider, stating a rule, and by way of caution,—thus, “be just in distributing these commodities to the poor; give due weight, and see that you do no harm to the oil and the wine.” These were necessary to comfort and health. The agents who held the balance, and who needed this charge to do justice, were the Prefects. They were entrusted with the collection of the taxes and revenues; and, if they were not checked, abuses would follow. Laws were made by the Roman Senate for this purpose. Sometimes the law named the price to be affixed for each quantity of the different articles; hence the charge, “a measure of wheat for a penny.” Gibbon notices the aggravated oppressions of the taxation by an edict of Caracalla carried rigidly through by the Provincial Governors, who often made matters worse by *unjust exactions*. Cicero's orations against Varus will show us the various arts of oppression practiced by the tax gatherers with regard to the weight, the price, the quantity, and the carriage of the several commodities. Taxes were paid in articles of produce; and wheat and barley, wine and oil, are specially noticed by the historians of the day, as the most usual articles in which the demand was paid, and these articles were bestowed upon the soldiers as donatives.

All this grinding exaction spread ruin throughout the Empire. Agriculture was in a state of depression; commerce in a state of stagnation, and the national finances were exhausted. All this had a ruinous effect on the Empire. Gibbon marks this as the second step in the decline of the Roman Empire.

#### THE FOURTH SEAL.

A *pale* horse is the emblem: death was the rider, and hades, or the state of the dead, followed. This rider is not a representative of a functionary, and ruler; but the personification of death, or a time of mortality. The period referred to was from A.D. 248 to 260.

The colour of the horse, the name of the rider, and hades following in the train, as if anxious to embrace in its shades the living, dying men, are images of the rapid progress of death and the grave swallowing up myriads.

The commission given to the rider was to kill upon earth with four sore judgments,—the sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts, betokening a great mortality from these several causes. Power was given to this rider over the fourth part of the earth, or the Roman Empire. Each of the four instruments had its allotted work. This is indicated and illustrated by former examples. “Say thou unto them, thus saith the Lord God; as I live surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence,” (Ezek. xxxiii. 27.) “And it shall

come to pass, if they say unto thee, whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the Lord; such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity." Jer. xv. 2.

Was there actually such a period in the Roman history, consecutive to the former period above noticed.? There was, within 12 or 15 years after Alexander Severus, or about A.D. 248, commencing under Philip and continuing to the death of Gallicanus in 268. Gibbon speaks of this period as the twenty years of "shame and misfortune, of confusion and calamity:" as the time in which "the ruined Empire seemed to approach the *last and fatal moment of its dissolution.*" He notices the causes as actually those in the symbol. The barbarous and military tyrants—famine as the inevitable consequence of rapine and oppression. Famine is almost always followed by epidemic diseases, the effect of scanty and unwholesome food. The plague ravaged every province, every city, and almost every family for 15 years, without intermission. Part of the time 5000 persons died daily at Rome, many towns were entirely depopulated. We may suspect that war, pestilence, and famine had consumed the moiety of the human race. When a country is desolated by these causes, wild beasts generally follow in the train. This was actually the case in this instance. Thus how true to the symbol were these circumstances, transpiring exactly at this time.

**THE FIFTH SEAL.**

The horses cease to appear. The empire was recussitated under Claudius, Aurelian, Probus, and Dioclesian. It was a sort of new empire under four divisions. The unity was destroyed, so that the horse does not properly figure it, the horse and horsemen are no longer produced, and a new scene is presented. The scene is changed to one beneath the altar. The circumstances change from the Roman empire to the church. In the altar-court all the solemnities of worship were performed; and, in any thing to be represented concerning the church and divine worship, we should expect to be directed to the altar-court.

The period of this seal is symbolized as the era of persecution, and we have introduced, souls under the altar, slain for the word of God. There had been a degree of persecution going on from the first seal, and downwards; but here an intimation is given of farther, and greater persecution.

An appeal is made to God for judgment. Souls cry from under the altar, or the blood from under the altar cries. The blood of victims offered in sacrifice under the law was poured under the altar. The blood of martyrs was poured out like that of victims at the foot of the altar, and it is thus noticed because they submitted to death as a sacrifice to God for the cause of his truth. John saw two altars, an altar of incense, and an altar for burnt offerings. It was natural to consider those who had yielded up their lives for the cause of God and Christ, as having been sacrificed, for the whole of the sacrificial

system is an allegory. It cried—not for vengeance, but for justice. Their blood is represented as crying as Abel's did, from the ground. The people of God do not think of avenging their own death, but the oppressions of God's people make a strong appeal to the ear of justice. The same appeal is often made in Scripture, "O Lord how long shalt thou look on," (Ps. xxxv. 17.) How long, Lord, how long shall the wicked triumph, (Ps. xciv. 3.) They knew there would be a retribution and they had waited more than two centuries, but God had not appeared in their behalf; and still persecution was raging.

White robes were given them. White betokens *innocence*. They had testimonials of their innocence granted to them by God in due time, interfering and clearing up the whole matter. White robes also betoken *justification*; they are the emblem of acquittal. God assures them he will justify them before men. "The blood of his servants will he avenge," (Deut. xxxii. 43.) "Make known to the heathen the avenging of the blood of thy servants, which has been shed," (Ps. lxxix. 10.) They were desired to wait until their whole number were completed, and then God would maintain their cause in a visible manner.

The historical fulfilment of this symbol is striking. A persecution took place upon Dioclesian's accession to the imperial throne, which lasted until the introduction of the Christian era of the empire, in the sixth century. Dioclesian declared his intention of abolishing the Christian name. He raised



a pillar, and caused an inscription to be placed on it, that he had extirpated Christianity.

But God did appear in behalf of his people and gave them a public justification, by means of Constantine Galerius, who issued an edict, confessing by implication at least, the wrong he had done to the Christians, and entreating them to pray for him.

#### THE SIXTH SEAL.

The emblems seen by St. John on the opening of the Sixth Seal, were a great earthquake—the darkening of the sun—the moon becoming blood—the stars fallen—the fleeing away of the heavens—the removal of the mountains and the islands—and the consternation of the great men of the earth. These signs do not symbolize the day of judgment, as some suppose. The sequel contradicts this idea, for still the world rolls on with all its busy action, crimes and errors. This is only the Sixth Seal, and there are yet to follow the Seventh Seal, including Seven Trumpets and Seven Vials. The description does not bear the character of the final judgment, for there is no mention made of the resurrection and tribunal of Christ; it is undoubtedly to be understood figuratively, of times of great tribulation, and of great political and ecclesiastical changes. It undoubtedly expresses some sudden and extraordinary revolution in the Roman empire, the subject of the preceding Seal; it is the downfall of Paganism, and the adoption of Christianity by Constantine in the fourth century. Similar language is employed to express other changes and revolutions.

(See Jer. iv. 23, 24; Hosea. x. 8; Ezek. xxxviii. 20; Ps. xviii; Isa. xiii. 13.)

St. John is now directed again to the Roman world, the landscape of which was before him. The heavens above it was its own firmamental heavens. All was still and serene. But on the opening of the sixth seal the whole scene is in agitation. An earthquake shakes the earth: mountains, islands, and rocks, sink beneath the shock, even as figs fall from a fig tree by the wind. Kings and Generals, freemen and bondmen are panic struck, and call for rocks and mountains to hide them.

It is a general practice in the Scriptural use of figures, to transfer everything mighty to heaven. The stars of heaven are the natural symbols of the greatness and the splendour of earthly rulers. Thus the king of Babylon is described as the morning star fallen from heaven. The same thing occurs in this Book, chap. 12; mighty kings appear as stars of heaven, and their overthrow as their falling down to the earth. In chap. viii. 10, a great star of heaven denotes a great and mighty ruler. All this applies to the overthrow of Pagan Rome by Constantine in the fourth century.

The champions of Paganism who were first to feel the stroke were Maximen, Galerius, Dioclesian, and Licinius. The sun of the Pagan Empire sets. By the heavens departing as a scroll, and rolled together, is denoted the removal of the whole civil and ecclesiastical polity of the Empire. This is similar to Isaiah's phraseology, chap. xxxiv. 4.

It might have been thought exceedingly unlikely

that the Christian body, comparatively so small and so diminished by persecution, should have effected so mighty a revolution. The order of this book intimates that this great event should take place after the Dioclesian persecution ; so that all these events are true to the symbol.

And how was this mighty Revolution actually accomplished ? God can always raise up fit instruments to accomplish any work necessary to be done. If the Jews are to be delivered he has a Cyrus ready to accomplish it. And now as the Christians were to be emancipated he raised up Constantine.

Constantine is said to have seen a cross in the heavens, and to have been advised by a voice from heaven to adopt that ensign as his banner ; and was assured that through it he should conquer. Army after army, and Emperor after emperor, were routed, and soon fled. Maximian, Maxentius, Maximin, and Licinius, were all defeated. When Maxentius went forth to battle, he was fortified by heathen oracles. Here was Paganism against Christianity, fairly tested. He made his vow to Jupiter that if successful he would extirpate Christianity. Licinius ridiculed Christianity and staked the falsehood of that divine system on his success. Terror then must have seized the minds of the Pagans ; the Galilean was conquering them. A sense of the wrath of the Lamb rested on the opposing leaders ; and a general consternation was experienced by the opposers. They fled to hide themselves, and took shelter any where. In the political heavens the sun of Pagan supremacy was darkened—the moon eclipsed and blood red—

and not a few of the stars had been shaken violently to the ground, and in the end the whole system was abolished. This is the interpretation of the figures in the symbol before us. And in this interpretation everything succeeds in chronological order; every thing is consistent with former examples, and every thing in the symbols is fully covered by the events.

How admirably has all the great events of the Roman Empire, from Domitian to Dioclesian and Galerius, been depicted by these seals. All doubts as to their intended application must vanish.—And thus will God bring about every event which has yet to transpire, until every enemy of his church, and every system of error, shall be subdued; and the omnipotent shall reign universally. Hasten, Lord, the time? Bless the means and instrumentalities employed! Amen.



## DISCOURSE III.

### THE SEALING AND PALM-BEARING VISION.

Rev. vii — "And after these things I saw four angels standing 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, 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, 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 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 Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of 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. After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with 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 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 worshipped God, saying, Amen : Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, what are these which are arrayed in white robes ? and whence came they ? 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. 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. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

By enigmatical representations the Apostle had been noticing the course of events which were to happen in the Roman world down to the time of Constantine, when the state became Christian. And before the Christian condition of the Empire is considered, and its desolation after its apostacy, there is an *episode* introduced, contained in this chapter, respecting a check and delay of those judgments, until *the servants of God were designated and secured*. We may briefly state the subject.

Constantine, having been established in power, patronized and exalted Christianity. Peace followed by patronage, promoted corruption, and gradual apostacy began to develope itself.

Let us *first* notice the terms and symbols of the prophecy. Four angels hold the four winds of the earth ready to emit them, but are restrained by another angel until the servants of God are sealed.

An *angel* is any messenger of God, sent by him with some commission. *Wind* always betokens some desolating judgment; for example, "And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and I will scatter them towards all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come." (Jer. xlix. 36; see also Dan. vii. 2.) This was an intimation of coming judgment. Four, on the four corners of the earth—the Roman earth. These were, as we shall afterwards see, *chastising bands of barbarians*. The angel from the east with the seal, is the Lord Jesus Christ. He commanded to hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, until the servants of

God were sealed. *Trees* signify kings and nobles, as in chap. viii. 7, ix. 4; trees and grass denote the high and low. In the Old Testament, trees are the common symbol of the great, (Isa. x. 18, 19.) Trees of Ashur, in contradistinction to the brushwood, are the great ones. The house of David appears as a high cedar in Lebanon. Here, the wind must blow upon no tree until permission is given.

Clouds were gathering and preparing to explode and to devastate the Roman earth. The destroying Tempest angels were ready to do their work, but the impending storms were put under a temporary restraint until the servants of God were sealed.

Let us look into the state of things which was the cause of this impending outpouring of wrath, and which gave occasion for selecting, sealing, and securing the faithful from among the mass of professing Christians. Judgments do not happen at random. Thus the winds are held by four angels, at the command of another angel. There is an agency appointed by which they are inflicted, and not without cause.

This cause was an incipient apostacy of the church—that Romanism afterwards described in chap. xii. had now its manifest beginning. A great change had taken place in the outward circumstances of the church of Christ; a change from deep depression to vivid prosperity. It was natural to feel exultation, under such a change of circumstances: and writers of that day indulge in glowing descriptions of the prosperity and glory of the church. They thought the millenium was come: that it was of



them the prophet spake when he said, "The wilderness and the solitary places shall be glad for them, the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose."

But the result of this change in externals was far different to this exalted estimation. It was, in fact, the mystery of iniquity working. The church soon became corrupt. The persecutions of the heathen did not injure her so much as this sunshine of court favor. The greater part of the professors of Christianity, were Christians only in name, and by profession only, but were earthly minded. They manifested a lack of genuine piety. They became of the world, mere fashionable Christians. The court and the aristocracy had embraced the profession of the religion of Christ; and favors were bestowed upon the members of the church. To be called a Christian was the way to wealth and honor. Splendid cathedrals and churches were built, and a splendid ritual and ceremonies were introduced. The poor outcast ministers became the companions of kings, princes, and courtiers. Riches poured in upon them on every hand. By degrees they became superior even to the civil power itself. As a consequence the pure doctrines of Christianity were adulterated. The word of God was not explained in simplicity. Tradition began to be in authority. Allegorizing did away with much of its true meaning, especially on one main particular, a saving faith in the great atonement. The priesthood began to intervene between the people and Christ. The communion table was changed into an altar, and some foreshadowings of the mass are recognized. Cere-

monies were multiplied. The Church was made the Saviour. The sacrament of Baptism was trusted in as having, in itself, a saving efficacy. Instead of its being an introduction into the church, it was deferred until the approach of death, that it might be a passport to heaven. In short, almost every element of Popery was instituted. And to make matters even worse, Arianism became very prevalent, which in another way rejected the blood of Christ.

This state of things, which in point of fact actually took place at the time to which the scene in the vision alludes, is here implied by the distinct recognition of God's chosen, who cleaved to the blood of Christ as the only medium of justification before God: for this contains the intimation that the majority did not. When it is said of the pious that they eschew evil, it is as strongly intimated that all others do not. The specified number, mentioned in the text, were chosen out of the mass of professors—a plain intimation of the defective state of the residue. The Apocalyptic figure forms an antithesis to the spirit of the age alluded to. Thus the symbol agrees with the facts of the period.

This state of things was the cause of the gathering cloud of wrath. That wrath was kindled, but its infliction was *suspended*, until he had gathered together his own faithful people, who furnished to the rest an example for imitation, and to whom also was granted a space for repentance.

In the midst of this putrid mass of corruption, God had a few faithful people; and these he would

render secure. Painful solicitude must have been felt in the anticipations of judgment, such as are depicted in a subsequent part of these Revelations. God's true people are assured that they are kept in safety. God was about to humble the apostatizers, but first he will take care of his own. Hold back, he exclaims with earnestness, (with a *loud* voice) these rough winds of tribulation, for a little season. God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. An ark must be built for the security of Noah—the invading Romans must fall back from Jerusalem, until the saints are escaped. The angel about to destroy Sodom delays, until Lot and his family, notwithstanding their tardy motion, escape. Thus we see it in Ezekiel, before the angels with the slaughter weapons in their hands go through Jerusalem to slay the wicked, they were to wait until God's servants are marked on the forehead. And thus God always deals with his people.

From the explanation we have already given to the symbols, we should expect to find that these judgments would be evils falling upon the great men, and upon the state itself, by some marauding bands of cruel destroyers. But is there any fact in history which occurred at that time, answerable to the symbolization of the restraint of the winds? There is. Gibbon says, “the *threatening tempest* of barbarians, which so soon subverted the foundation of Roman greatness, was still repelled, or *suspended on the frontiers.*” It was during this suspension that God's servants were *sealed*.

Sealing is a phrase which often occurs: thus in

Ezekiel, and in some subsequent parts of these visions. The Apostle St. Paul, in several places, introduces it. "After that ye believed, ye were sealed," &c. "Sealed to the day of redemption." "The promise of God remaineth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." The seal designates the Holy Spirit of God, by which believers are sealed to the day of redemption. Here the sealing angel is Christ; for who but he can seal with the Holy Spirit? He baptizes with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.

This sealing intimates that they were,—1. To *dissociate* or *separate* themselves from the apostates; as a person marks his own property, and sets it aside from that of others. 2. *Recognized* by God, as a person distinguishes his property from that of others, by the seal. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." by this seal. 3. Sealed for *secrecy*. They are God's hidden ones: the world knoweth them not. 4. Sealed for *safety*. They are under his protection. Kept by the assistance of his grace. In the same manner we seal up those things which we may wish to keep *secret* and *safe*. 5. Sealed to *confirm*. They that feel the Spirit's seal are constantly strengthened thereby. 6. To *promote holiness* in individual believers. "And let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Who are those noticed as being sealed? Twelve tribes are named. But not the literal Israel, but the spiritual Israel of God. The former position is vigorously maintained by some theorists. They assert that the passage symbolizes the conversion of

Israel and their gathering to Zion. But various weighty reasons preponderate against this opinion.

1. Christians are recognized as the spiritual Israel. Even when Jerusalem was standing St. Paul taught the Gentile Christians to appropriate to themselves the name and privileges of Israel. And when Jesus Christ prefigured the apocalyptic churches, he did it by the symbolical representation of the Jewish sanctuary and candlestick: and Christian martyrs are represented as souls under the altar. This is a principle which is prominent throughout the whole New Testament; and in many predictions of prophecy; indeed in all referring to spiritual events, the term Israel alludes to the church of Christ.

2. The manner in which the number is made up, tends to disprove the assertions in question, and that it is not a literal interpretation we are to adopt. We have not the regular tribes introduced; neither are they introduced in the regular order; but twelve tribes are made up for *spiritual* reasons. This will appear evident if we consider,—1. The *intermingling* of the tribes springing from the bond women, and the free women. This militates against a literal interpretation. 2. The omission of one tribe, and the substitution of another, is proof of the same kind. The tribe of Dan is set aside, and the tribe of Manasseh is mentioned, and also the tribe of Joseph; while Ephraim is not named. One might have thought that as Joseph did not include Ephraim and Manasseh, Ephraim would have been mentioned instead of Joseph. But a solution of these mysteries occurs. Dan was an apostate, the same as

Judas, whose name and place among the twelve Apostles was lost. He turned to idolatry early in the history of the judges, and remained an idolator, and is therefore discarded from the tribes of Israel. With respect to Ephraim, an Ephraimite, (Micah) set up the first false worship in Israel. In the place of Ephraim, Joseph is put. Levi is put on a common level with the other tribes, to show that the Levitical Priesthood is extinct and that all saints are priests. Judah is mentioned first, because Christ was of that tribe. Thus the whole of this arrangement is distinct from Judaism, and as distinctively Christian.

3. The exact number, 144,000, proves it to be the spiritual and not the literal Israel that is intended. Can we suppose that there would have been neither more nor less than 12,000 in each tribe, that were sealed, irrespective of the greater or smaller total number of persons in each tribe, if this were a real literal gathering? The statistics are not of *numerical* but of *theological* value, and indicate the gathering together, recognizing and protecting, of God's true and faithful people under the term Israel, which is a covenant term. And, if I am not mistaken, as I have before stated, wherever that term occurs in prophetic language, it bears that import. *Twelve* is the signature of the church, sacred in the synagogue and in the church of the New Testament. The woman who represents the church has a crown of twelve stars,—the city has twelve gates, walls and foundations,—and there were twelve Apostles. The use of such modes of expression is

to show that the church stands in close covenant relation to God,—a substitution and continuation of the ancient church, which was to be developed in one grand and glorious Christian commonwealth.

After this the Apostle beheld a great and innumerable company. But are the 144,000, and the innumerable multitude, two distinct companies, or the same differently represented; and in the last instance viewed *prospectively*, and as pledged for glory? The latter appears to be the fact. John saw them in vision, not actually and literally in heaven; but he foresaw that by the blessing of God on their acts of faith and love, the 144,000 would be secure in present tribulation;—that they would expand so as to fill the earth, and would finally be delivered from all tribulation, and infallibly be brought to heaven.

Hence then, it would appear, that the multitude is not comprised of heathen—Christians, distinguished from Jewish believers, as the advocates of the above mentioned scheme maintain that they are; but the entire church, whether Jewish or Christian—the sealed under another aspect. They are alike God's faithful and redeemed servants; the same in the period and circumstances of their existence; living in a time of tribulation, which forms the subject of the symbol. The same in the specialities of their character. The difference in expressed numbers not affecting their identity. Only the *palm-bearers* may be considered with the addition, as to many of them having been gathered out of the limits of the Roman earth; for they were of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.

They are figured as in a state of beatitude, having received the end of their faith, the final salvation of their souls. They are admitted to the vision of God, with an exemption from all sorrows and trials—a band of weary pilgrims arrived out of the howling wilderness in their heavenly Canaan, and rejoicing in their Feast of Tabernacles. The events last mentioned do not belong to the time of the vision. The vision itself is *prospective* and *anticipative* in this particular, of events still distant, for the purpose of introducing another feature in this representation.

An intimation is here given that there is assuredly a state of blessedness to all who answer in character to the sealed ones and palm-bearers—those who have washed their robes in the blood of Christ; and thus the vision is intended to yield encouragement to all God's suffering people in all ages.

This company is said to be one which no man can number. But this must be considered as a phrase signifying a large, undetermined number, and not as being one absolutely impossible to count: for any multitude, howsoever great, is made up of individuals, and individuals may be enumerated, as made up of so many units. The phrase, therefore, expresses the vast number of the saved, from all parts of the earth.

There is no church ~~feat~~ure portrayed which is of a local, sectarian, or national character. The religion of the century in question, made church authority every thing, and salvation to flow through



the medium of priests. Here the characteristics are entirely personal. The questions made of the highest importance on earth are not thought of in heaven. Those Christians were many of them not much, if at all, known to Constantine, or his grandees. They did not live in ease and splendor, but came out of great tribulation. They might be found in dungeons, or in exile, or in voluntary banishment, escaping from a heartless profession of religion, or enduring the common privations of life.

They are the saved by Christ. The particulars of their salvation are especially given. Their acceptance did not consist in the fact that they had shed their own blood, or had been wounded for Christ's sake, but in having an interest in the blood and wounds of the Lamb. They held the doctrines of the atonement. They were accepted solely through Christ's sacrifice, and through faith in it. They washed their robes, and this implies an act of their own. They were faithful notwithstanding suffering, and every thing calculated to turn them out of the way. We have here, therefore, the great doctrines of the atonement, and of salvation by living faith in Christ. All that bore the Christian name were sealed, but only such as renounced dependence on every thing else, and trusted solely in Christ for acceptance. This is undoubtedly noticed, because the professing church in that day was departing wider, and wider from this vital doctrine.

What was the tribulation they had come through? for there was no special persecution. Evidently the troubles of this life—the hunger, thirst, heat, tears,

which all, even the best, experience. But more, they endured the usual plagues and contradictions of the world. These would have a distressing influence upon them. The world smiled upon the nominal Christian, and by the same rule it frowned upon the earnest and sincere.

As the professing church was departing from apostolical truth, so at this time the real church was giving a more marked prominence to it. Augustine, and some few others, constantly entered their protest against the current errors, assiduously asserting that sinners are saved by grace, through faith in the blood of Christ. Thus they answered to the symbol, and were chosen in Christ by their yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit. They concurred by the exercise of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ—through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth. And the vision shows us that there should be instruments raised up for the enforcement of this truth.

They were *clothed in white robes*, as a mark of purity. They are thus distinguished in consequence of their having been washed, and because of their faithfulness in keeping themselves unspotted from the world.

They had *palms in their hands*. Palm-bearing is not relative to victory, but to joy. At the Feast of Tabernacles, the children of Israel were to bring green branches of palms, and to rejoice before the Lord seven days. The Feast of Tabernacles was eminently a feast of joy. The immediate occasion of the joy was the prosperously concluded harvest.

Hence, on any joyful occasion, they carried palms. When our Lord entered Jerusalem much people took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him, and cried Hosanna, &c. In the present passage, the palm-bearers were animated by the joy of that salvation which they have received by Jesus. Hence they cried with a loud voice, *Salvation* to our God and to the Lamb. What a blessed thing to know they were saved everlastingly, and again to think how easily they might have been lost. How near they were sometimes to it. How quietly they could miss the means of grace. Now delivered out of all danger and distress. Our God that sits upon the throne has granted unto us salvation, and we have to thank him for it for ever and ever.

And the angels who stood round about the throne fell prostrate, and said, "Amen." Angels had much to do with them in leading them through the wilderness, and it is with deep emotion they see their charge safe and happy.

They shall be rewarded "before the throne," and in his temple. He will be a tent spread over them. They shall neither hunger nor thirst, but shall feed on Christ, the heavenly manna, and be led by him to the waters of salvation. They will never more experience any sorrow. Christianity did not exempt them from earthly sorrow. But there will be total exemption from it in the heavenly state.

On the contemplation of these grand results all Christians, if they see and feel aright, will be filled with profound reverence and exulting joy. Never may our triumphs end. Amen.

## DISCOURSE IV.

### THE HALF-HOUR'S SILENCE IN HEAVEN—THE INCENSE OFFERING— THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS.

REV. viii. :—"And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God ; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at 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 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 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 seven angels which had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded, and there followed 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 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 the sea, and had life, died ; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. And the third angel 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 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, 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 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!"

In this place commences the opening of the *seventh seal* ; which, it will be observed, includes the *seven trumpets*—or the seven trumpets are a development of the seventh seal. It forms the second grand

division of the things *future* to the times of St. John. We shall endeavor to proceed in this discourse as far as to the close of the first four trumpets.

The last chapter gave an account of the restraining of the tempest-angels from immediate action, and of the sealing of God's faithful people in the interim. We shall, therefore, be prepared to meet, in this chapter, with an account of those angels, after the restraint is taken off, letting loose these tempests; or, of those judgments being actually inflicted. But yet, there is a space, an interval, a silence or stillness in the atmosphere for a short space, covering at least the space occupied in sealing the faithful people of God.

On the opening of the seventh seal, according to our version, it is said, "there was silence for half an hour," which is generally supposed to occur *after* the seal was opened. But before we have concluded our observations, we shall probably find reasons for assigning that space a position *before* the opening of the seal. Heaven is often used for the *aerial firmament*; and the word rendered silence is often used for *stillness of inanimate nature*: hence the phrase would aptly imply *stillness from storms*. In the last vision we were informed the winds were remarkably restrained for a season, or a stillness ensued.

It is necessary we should endeavor to identify this *stillness* with the fact it symbolizes.

There are many opinions of the import of this silence. Some say it is a pause, or transition in the representation, for the hearing of prayer then to be offered. But the silence is represented *before* the

offering of the incense, whereas this interpretation would make it *identical* with, or *subsequent* to it. Again, it has been thought to be the millennial rest of the church, after the convulsions and revolutions previous to that event. But this would be to carry the scene far too forward, as there are many events to intervene. Others, again, declare it to be the peace after Constantine's establishment of Christianity. This would be a repetition of former scenes.

According to our version the silence is represented as occurring *subsequently* to the opening of the seal. But there are several difficulties connected with this consideration of a cessation from action after the opening of the seal. It might be thought very aptly to refer to the restraint of the roars of the wind, mentioned in the last vision, but for this, that the pause we should have supposed would have been *antecedent* to the opening of the seal to have been identified with the before mentioned restraint. And, further, it is introduced at the commencement of a new vision and act, but the restraint of the tempests was before the opening of the seventh seal.

This difficulty, however, is obviated by a reconstruction of the sentence, according to its grammatical import. The Evangelist uses the aorist, both here and in many other places, to signify the pluperfect, which tense never occurs in the Apocalypse. An instance, among many others, occurs in St. John's Gospel, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him." But it *had* previously *been* made by him. The aorist gives it the sense of the pluperfect—"had been made by him," *i.e.*,

previous to his coming into it. In this case the rendering will be, "and when he had opened the seventh seal there *had been* silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." And this gives the space of time, the calm or restraint of the winds *had* lasted, *previously* to the sounding of the trumpet.

And this stillness for half an hour is thus adapted to the restraint on the winds, as previously mentioned. The day is to be reckoned as twenty-four hours. The Lord's day, being the Sabbath, included one-seventh of the week. That Lord's day was a miniature chronology of the world; all the visions and emblems passed before the Apostle's mind during that time, intimating that it was emblematical of the grand period of time it would take to evolve the facts signified by the symbols. That period, from the Apostles time to the millennium, might be from 1700 to 1800 years, and, with the millennium, would make 2700 or 2800 years. Allowing from four to six hours for the production of the supplemental part, and for the dictation of the Epistles, there will remain from 18 to 20 hours for the representation of the main continuous series of visions. This would give for one hour, a space of from 140 to 160 years; and for half an hour, a space of from 70 to 80 years or something near to it, if we could calculate the exact numbers. The text says, *about* the space of half an hour; it does not state it with exact precision. This would come to the space of that restraint of the tempest-angels, from Constantine's final victory over Licinius, in 324 to Alarac's revolt and invasion of the empire, upon the death of Theodoric in 395; or,

71 years. Thus, then, by commencing this vision by the phrase, that when he opened the seventh seal there *had been* silence in heaven for half an hour, he merely specifies how long the restraint he had before mentioned continued, and when the action commenced. All this time the tempest-angels had been restrained; or, the invaders had refrained from establishing themselves within the Roman frontiers. They either remained stationary in their own territories; or, if occasionally they made excursions, they were driven back. The *threatening tempests*, as Gibbon states, were still repelled, or suspended on the frontiers. This is Mr. Elliott's exposition of the symbol. Dr. Cumming comes to the same result. He leaves out the 1000 years of the millennium, and takes the day at twelve hours. For my own part, I prefer Mr. Elliott's method of explication.

But after this the prohibition was withdrawn, and the seven angels have handed to them seven trumpets. But previously to sounding them there is a *second pause*. A kind of prelude ensues, which was one of intercession, followed by judgment on those who obstinately persisted in their apostacy.

The incense angel appears with a censer. This in the *first action* in this *second scene*. He stood at the altar, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints, and the smoke of the incense ascended up before God, with the prayers of all saints. This ministering angel priest, is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus Christ, the great High-Priest of our profession, of whom under the same title, we have so many



descriptions in the New Testament. The Priesthood was one of the functions of Christ, the Angel of the Covenant. The high-priest alone used the golden censer;—the ordinary priests used silver ones. In Ezekiel the angel clothed in the linen vestments of the priesthood, marked the pious, and then took fire from between the cherubim, and scattered it over apostatizing Jerusalem. Here, consequent on the sealing, the angel takes the altar fire, and scatters it over apostatizing Roman christendom. The position was that of the officiating priest under the Levitical law. The Divine law commanded that, on receiving the incense of the worshippers, he should take burning coals from off the altar, place them on his censer, and carry them with him into the inner sanctuary, and lay it on the golden altar within the veil. Other fire was forbidden.

It seems to be intended to show, that our Lord Jesus Christ takes the prayers of his saints as the incense, and commingles them with his own gracious intercession. We are here taught that it is only by the meritorious atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God, that the prayers and praises even of the saints can rise acceptably before the throne of God.

The symbol in the vision shows us the true character of the sealed ones, and the marked difference between them and the apostatizers.

The prayers of *all* saints were offered and accepted. *All* who were *saints* offered up these prayers and praises. Consequently those who did not offer them were not saints; and their offerings were not

accepted. The saints recognized the perfect propitiatory offering of Jesus Christ; and he received their appeals to him, and presented them to God. In this *Incense vision* we have an explanation of the reason of God's proceeding to the execution of the threat. The people were unimproved. There was no repentance for their sin.

At this period (about A.D. 395.,) the vast mass of professing Christians trusted to other means, and offered no incense. Saints and martyrs began to be invoked, and ceremonies began to be trusted in. The relics of saints were in great demand; monks hawked them for gain. Fictitious miracles were reported, and pilgrimages were made to their shrines. The highest, and most influential of their bishops and doctors led the way; while but a few in proportion, among whom were Augustine, and Vigilantius, adhered to the primitive doctrine. These few, however, clung to the sacrifice of Christ, and presented him with much incense. There is ample evidence of all these facts recorded by the ecclesiastical historians, and even by Gibbon.

The appearance of Christ, as High-Priest, with his censer, strongly symbolizes the character of these times; and at the same time strongly reproveth the flagrant conduct of the apostatizers. St. Paul has given notice of the insidious commencement and working of the mystery of iniquity, which went on developing itself up to this time. How sadly has all this been re-acted in a certain church, in our own day!

The intercessor cast God's fire down on the earth,

as indicative of his holy wrath and judgments, which must befall the unfaithful idolators. The blessings of Christ's sacrifice will, for their neglect, be turned into judgments. Immediately there are voices and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. Of these we shall say more subsequently.

At the same time the seven angels prepared themselves to sound. The representation of the seven angels shows us from whom all action proceeds in the great drama.

Some expositors consider all the trumpets to relate to the yet *future*. On the contrary we maintain, with a great number of excellent interpreters, that they have already, with the exception of some of the vials in the seventh, been fulfilled; and doubt not that this will be made as evident as the parts answering to the seals.

There is a significancy in the use of trumpets, by way of giving utterance to judgments, which are to be inflicted. Trumpets were used by the Jews, at God's appointment, and under his direction, to usher in the sabbath, the new moons, new years, and other festivals; and to call together the people. The movements of the camp of Israel were directed by their sound. A trumpet, blown by a prince, in time of war, under God's direction, showed they were under the protection of the Almighty. This instrument was employed on account of the loud piercing sound which it was made to utter. The characteristic, whether employed in festivals, or in time of war, is the raising of the state of feeling above the common measure. Perhaps there was a

reference to the fall of Jericho. Seven priests were to sound seven trumpets for seven days, and seven times the last day : then Jericho fell. Thus, when all these symbolic trumpets are blown, the walls of the spiritual Jericho will fall. In the days of the seventh trumpet, the mystery of God shall be fulfilled."

There were to be seven trumpets sounded ; and, under the seventh, seven Vials were to be poured out.

The events prefigured by these trumpets have a voice, and will clearly indicate, and loudly proclaim the period in which God is acting in their accomplishment.

The seven trumpets are bound up together, and are grouped in *four*, and *three*. The first four, like the first four seals, refer to one subject—which, in this case, is the ravages of the Goths. The plagues of the first four trumpets depict severally the destructive tempests, afflicting severally the *third* part of the *Roman earth*—*third* part of the *sea*—*third* part of *rivers*—*third* part of the *luminaries of heaven*.

The particular interpretation we shall give, is warranted by the circumstances in the preceeding vision of the restraint of the tempests, which, as has been illustrated from Gibbon, was the restraint of the barbarians, who threatened the empire. It is evidently implied that the tempest-angels have let loose these winds ; and that these four trumpets represent in part their action. "

The *third part*, which occurs in each of these visions, is the West of Europe, with the African pro-

vinces ; and which was afterwards termed the Western Empire. The Roman empire had been divided into four sections by Dioclesian, afterwards into two, and then all were included again in one. Constantine early made a new division into three parts ; between himself, Lucinius, and Maximin. To Constantine fell Gaul, Spain, Britain, Italy, and Africa. The other two parts were the Illyrian prefecture, and the Asiatic provinces and Egypt. Afterwards there was a two-fold division, the eastern and western, and each section had its share of the middle. But this does not affect the division in the Apocalypse, as the lines of division still remain distinct. Each section had its share in the frontier rivers, the Rhine, the Danube, the Euphrates, and also the Mediterranean. Although the individual Empire was ruled by Constantine, yet this avengement was renewed at his death, and a third conferred on each of his sons. This exactly answers to the symbol of the vision, and it was this western third part before described which was the scene of these plagues.

Having gone through these preliminaries, let us now turn to the development of the contents of the trumpet ; and we cannot but reflect how admirably minute and exact the Apocalypse is in such particular facts.

The first four Trumpets apply to the Western third. The clouds now began to explode in storms of thunder, lightning, and hail.

#### THE FIRST TRUMPET.

The first Trumpet sounded, and there followed hail and fire. Now the fire from the censer began

to burn ; and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. This affected the continental Provinces of the western division, as the scene of ravage over Spain reached the shore south and west of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. The entire continental division of the Western Empire was dissolved by it. The Asiatic continent, the maritime Province of Africa, and the European Provinces of the Eastern Empire, were free. It left frightful devastation to verify the images of fire and hail, mingled with blood.

The historical fulfilment is clearly narrated ; but to exhibit it we should have to give, in the combined four Trumpets, the history of the five great destroyers of the western empire. The limits we have assigned ourselves will forbid us to do it at large. We must refer to Gibbon, and other historians of this period. A brief summary or reference will be all that we can now give as a guide to the student of prophecy.

As it respects the first Trumpet, the devastations commenced in 396, and continued from 400 to 410, or 412. They were conducted by Alaric, and Rhadagaisus. They proceeded across the Rhine onwards to Rome, devastating the provinces, and laying Rome in ashes, and rendering Gaul a desert. The blast was hushed with the death of Alaric.

#### THE SECOND TRUMPET.

Here the figure is a burning mountain cast into the sea, upon which the sea became blood, and the third part of creatures died.

The sea is not to be understood figuratively, but

as fixing the locality of the place, and applies to the Mediterranean sea. Just the same as several other local terms are applied in several prophecies. The term river, used in several parts of this prophecy, has the same application.

This visitation fell on the western side of the Mediterranean, the islands, and the transmarine provinces ; and on the maritime provinces of Africa. A mountain signifies a nation. Jeremiah likens Babylon to a burning mountain.

Facts in history verify all this. The eruption was conducted by Genseric. He entered into the work in 439. He desolated such parts of the Western Empire as had been spared by Alaric. Hippo and Carthage were burned, and his fleet swept the Mediterranean. The isles were subdued, and the sea coasts ravaged. The Roman fleets were destroyed. But he died in 477 ; and the blasts of the second Trumpet were silenced.

#### THE THIRD TRUMPET.

The volcano had not yet fully spent itself before another of the angels sounded his Trumpet. The symbols are a star fallen from heaven, burning the third part of the rivers and fountains of water. This star was called *wormwood*—bitter—indicating the bitterness of the inflictions. The third part of men died from his bitter infusion.

In 450, Attala—the scourge of God—moved against the Western Provinces, along the upper Danube, and fountains of European waters, reducing to ashes populous cities along the Rhine ; and finally bent his course to the Alps and vallies of Italy.

He returned precipitately before he reached Rome ; and died suddenly of apoplexy in 453. This ceased the peals of the third Trumpet.

THE FOURTH TRUMPET.

The third part of the sun, moon, and stars, smitten and darkened.

This signifies the extinction of royal power, and of princes, nobles, &c. But little was now left to the western empire but the name. Its Provinces had been torn away : its maritime provinces, fleet, and commerce annihilated. But yet the sun, moon, and stars, were shining in the political heavens. But now the time was come when even the title and insignia of sovereignty were to become extinct. Odoacer, one of the chiefs of Attala, assuming the command of the Heruli, marched into the heart of Italy, and abolished the name and office of the Roman Emperor of the West. Romulus Augustulus abdicated the throne.

Thus the third of the Roman imperial sun was extinguished ; and, after the government of Odoacer, for a short space, Theoderic, the Ostrogoth, reigned in Italy, as an independent sovereign.

In the interim, between the fourth and fifth Trumpets, as supplementary matter, there appears another angel giving forewarning of future *woes*, to be contained in the *three succeeding Trumpets*.

The time is between the extinction of the Western Empire, and the rise of Mohamedanism, and the Saracens—an interval of between 40 or 45 years. During this time the church had a space for repentance, and opportunities of reformation, but they



degenerated more and more. The announcement of this angel is to be regarded in the light of a warning and strong admonition.

In the facts of history we should be induced to look for *instances* of such a *warning* voice. *The Fathers of the time gave it.* They testified of the wickedness and corruptions of the day, and urged to repentance. They were warned by *plagues and earthquakes.* In one plague, at Constantinople, 10,000 people are stated to have died daily. Gibbon states, from Procopius, that 100,000,000 were exterminated in the age of Justinian, by plague and famine. These were awful warnings from God.

Yet there were great foreshadowings of the inflictions of these woes in the increased corruptions of the church. Purgatory, private confession, the worship of relics, the merits and mediation of saints, were recognized as doctrines. The bishop of Rome began decisively to appear as Antichrist. He assumed the name of Vicar of Christ, which meant the same as Antichrist. Antichrist does not only mean opposed to Christ, but in the room or place of Christ. What a *cause* for woe, and what a sure indication that it would fall!

The fifth and sixth trumpets contain the *first woe*: the *second woe* is contained in chap. ix. 1-12; on which follows an Episode on the *little book*, and on the *witnesses* in chap. x., entire, and chap xi., to 14th ver., which is thought to symbolize the Reformation. The seventh trumpet contains the *third woe*, which is not introduced until the 11th chapter, 15, 19.

With a few brief reflections we will conclude this discourse.

1. How much we ought to be concerned for the purity of the church ; for every thing which relates to the peace and prosperity of the world depends upon it.

2. We have many reasons, and strong inducements to hold fast the primitive Apostolic doctrine—to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

3. Let us be careful to notice the hand of God in all events. “The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice with trembling.”



## DISCOURSE V.

### THE FIFTH TRUMPET; OR FIRST OR SARACENIC WOE.

REV. IX. 1-12.—“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth : and to him 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 was darkened by 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 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 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 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.”

FORMER means of improvement, which had been earnestly applied, had failed of producing any beneficial effect. Professing Christians had become more and more corrupt. Again, another Trumpet sounds, the sign of a succeeding judgment. It was to be one of those which had been forewarned, and which appears under the form of an army of locusts. This is God's general method of dealing with his erring creatures. Before he utterly destroys, he

uses severe chastisements. The prophet Amos impressively illustrates this method of the Divine procedure.

There is no scenic representation, as in some other places, to designate the locality of this transaction: but there is an identifying appropriateness, in this respect, in the symbols themselves. They are so exact, as to geographical propriety, that we can have no difficulty in coming to a definite interpretation. In prophetic declarations, where any particular country is alluded to, the plants, trees, animals, &c., peculiar to that country, are mentioned. The emblem here employed plainly shows from whence the scourge was to proceed. By noticing what is said in Scripture of locusts, we clearly expect them to come from Arabia, for this country is thus noted by all travellers and historians. And Arabia is the most noted country for the horse. The lion, also, has his haunts in the deserts of that country; both incorporated in the symbols. The Hebrew word for locust (*arbi*, from *rabi*, to multiply,) is nearly the same as Arabia, the country which is natural to them. The eastern third part of Roman Christendom was to be the sufferer under this devastation. This division had hitherto escaped the inflictions of special visitation; but they did not improve by the respite, and now the woe is to fall upon them.

We shall consider,

**I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE SYMBOLS AND THEIR APPLICATION.**

The symbols plainly identify the nature of the

woe; and the recorded events of the seventh century so entirely correspond to these symbols that we can have no hesitancy in deciding what were the events intended by the symbolization.

The symbolical agent in this action is an army of locusts.

1. The appearance under which they are represented is distinctly to be noticed.

The creature, although termed a locust, is of a peculiar conformation. In shape, "the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle," with crowns like gold on their heads; they had faces like men, hair like women, breast-plates like unto iron, accompanied with rumbling sounds made by their wings. They had tails, with stings, like scorpions. How remarkably applicable is this description to the people who inflicted this woe: or, in other words the emblem most clearly prefigures the *Saracens*.

An invading host is often compared to locusts. The point of comparison is first the *multitude*. In Hebrew locusts derive their name from their number, as we have noticed; their name signifies a multiplier. This is a feature of the Saracenic invaders. The second point of comparison is the *sudden inroads*, and the *desolation* they make; their *impetuosity* and *lion-like savage boldness*. To mark this more strongly they are said to have teeth like lions. In the book of Judges, (vi. 5,) it is said of the Midianites, Amalakites, and the children of the east: "And they came like the locusts for multitudes, and came to lay waste the land." Just so with the Arabian invaders. And the third point of resemblance

peculiar to these invaders is their *migratory habits*. Locusts migrate from the place where they are bred to other places in vast bodies. The Arabs are remarkable for their wandering habits. In general, they build no houses or cities, but dwell in tents, and move from place to place ; and further, the horse-like appearance indicates that the host would consist principally of cavalry, which was a striking feature in the Arabian warriors.

Their *lion-like courage* is distinctly indicated. They had teeth like lions. The Arabs were bold, fierce, and warlike ; impetuous and ferocious.— Their iron cuirass is frequently described by writers as a thing by which they are distinguished.

They had faces like men, crowns on their heads, with long hair like women. The Arabs were distinguished by their beards, or moustache. The Goth's had their faces smoothly shaven. Pliny speaks of the Arabs as wearing the turban, and having the hair long, with the moustache on the upper lip. So they are described by the leading historians in different ages. Ezekiel describes the Keturite Arabs as scorpions from the wilderness, which put beautiful crowns upon their heads. One of their national proverbs was, that God bestowed upon them the peculiarity that their turbans should be to them instead of diadems. Their long hair gave them an effeminate appearance, and it is remarkable, that notwithstanding their lion-like mien, they were excessively addicted to the softer passions ; and the indulgence of their passions was in fact one powerful motive to their enterprize.

The scorpion-like tails, with stings, remarkably indicates that they would inflict great misery and torture. The text states this, and it was so in fact. Encounters like theirs, so bitter and desolating, have scarcely ever been recorded in history.

These concurrent symbols, and their exact adaptation, fix the country from which these invaders were to come as Arabia. They serve also to impress us with the remarkable minuteness and exactitude of the emblems of this wonderful book.

2. But was there in fact any destructive eruption of the Arabs, on Roman Christendom, about the beginning of the seventh century? There was. And the movements and operations of the invaders form the chief and thrilling topics of the historians of that country. We shall not attempt to give any detail of those events. They are too diffuse to suit the character of these addresses. They are known to all readers of history; and if any here are not familiar with them, the scanty sketch we should be only able to give in this place, would not much add to their information. We refer the reader to trustworthy histories of that period, and the evidence will be complete and appropriate concerning these adversaries. We notice,

## II. THE SOURCE FROM WHENCE THEY EMINATED.

They are said to issue from the *bottomless pit*, or pit of the *abyss*. That pit had previously been opened by an agent permitted by Divine Providence; and the smoke ascended out of it as the smoke of a great furnace. This applies to the origin of the Saracenic invaders. The word is the same that is



used in Hebrew for the deep in Gen. i. 2,—the chaotic mass of void, substanceless, shapeless matter. By an extension of meaning it is used to express the receptacle of departed souls, and especially those of the wicked; and the destined abode of wicked spirits, (Rev. xx. 1.) This then denotes that the pit of hell is the place where they originated. The locusts did not come immediately from hell, but they proceeded out of the smoke which arose from thence. Did there then, about the seventh century, arise any hellish and false religion in Arabia? The sudden rise of Mohammedanism in Arabia, at this time, answers to the symbol. Its intention was to supercede the Gospel. In the spirit and on the strength of fanaticism, its author was incited to build up a strong, powerful, and widely extended empire. It was an extraordinary invention, full of pride and sensualism. It was properly an emanation from hell, and the smoke infused into them that fatal fanaticism, and that awful spirit of desolating revenge, which they possessed. The Arabs, on embracing the false system, were aroused from a lethargic condition, as though inspired by some noxious effluvia, to a state of military enthusiasm. And they were prepared, by their contempt and hatred of Christianity, to torture professing Christians.

We are next to observe,

### III. THE RESTRICTIONS THEY RECEIVED.

They were charged not to hurt the grass and trees—the inferior people and the nobles. That these terms are figurative, and have the application we have given them, appears from this, that further on

they are named in literal terms, "but only those men which have not the seal of God on their foreheads."

The limitation is further expressed, "And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months." That many individuals were actually killed is a fact: but those not killed, alone draw attention; and those only were killed who were not sealed on the forehead. The restriction from killing is defined by some as applicable to the Christian body politic. Divine providence prohibited this act. Mohamet declared his commission was against idolatry. He distinctly fixes the charge of being idolaters upon Christians, inasmuch as they worship the Virgin Mary. In the Koran Christians are charged with the sin of worshipping the Virgin Mary as God. Gibbon states that the Christians of the seventh century had relapsed into the semblance of Paganism;—their public and private vows were addressed to images and relics that degraded the temple of the earth; and the throne of the Almighty was darkened by a cloud of martyrs, saints, and angels, the objects of popular veneration. The Koran gives a like command, in a literal sense—not to hurt the grass and the trees. There is always something literal, combined with the figurative, in the fulfilment of these predictions. How different to this was the marauding desolations of the Goths and Vandals.

#### IV. THE AGENT AND LEADER IN THIS ERUPTION IS POURTRAYED.

The figure by which this personage is described

is a *fallen star*. He was to open the bottomless pit. There have been various conjectures as to the identity of this star. Nestorius, Sergius, Satan, the Pope, and others, have been severally fixed upon as the individual. But bishop Newton, Daubez, Hales, and Elliott, have given the reference to Mohamet. It denotes the same agency as opened the bottomless pit. That which issues from this abyss was Mohamedanism; and it would certainly follow, he that opened it was Mohamet.

A star denotes a ruler, a prince, civil or ecclesiastical. A star fallen, is a Prince degraded or shorn of his power. The ruler is an ideal person, including a whole series of real individuals, which is applicable to Mohamet and his successors.

Mohamet was by birth of the princely house of the Koreish, governor of Mecca; which house was acknowledged as sustaining important dominion. The keys of the Caaba, with which went the principality of Mecca, were in the hands of Mohamet's grandfather at the time of his own birth. His father and grandfather dying during Mohamet's minority, the headship of the tribe passed into the hands of another branch of the family. Thus was he stripped of all power, and even reduced to a menial capacity. He was, therefore, at the opening of the seventh century, a star fallen to the ground. But the fall of the star was the cause of all that afterwards followed. Had Mohamet succeeded to the chieftainship of the principality, he might have remained contented: but, degraded as he was, he was induced to endeavor to elevate himself. He began to lay plans for his fu-

ture aggrandizement. He retired to a cave three miles from Mecca every year, and there concocted the plan of his future operations, which ended in the subjugation of the fairest portions of the earth, and in overspreading them with his pernicious superstitions. This happily reminds us of the abyss from which the locusts issued.

After having remained in exile seven years, whither he had been driven by the Rulers of the principality, he returned as the prince and the prophet of his native country, asserting that he had received a divine commission, and commenced his aggressions on the neighboring countries; and afterwards spread his conquests far and wide.

In ver. 11, it is affirmed the king over them is *the angel of the bottomless pit*, named in Hebrew *Abaddon*, and in Greek *Apollyon*. This induces some interpreters to apply the passage to Satan himself: but something more literal than the influence which Satan exercises is intended. Satan never literally heads armies. Angel, in the Apocalypse, means some figurative agency, good or bad. It is not, then, Mohamet personally, but the spirit and disposition with which he was inspired, and which he infused into others; it was an incarnate principle of evil in the prophet, and in his successors. The name marks character. Schlegel called Mohamedanism "The infernal spirit that produced that Antichristian combination of spiritual and temporal authority." Whatever country they conquered, they established in it the false religion of Mohamet, and ruled it by its laws, and even actuated it by its spirit.

Not so the Goth and Vandal conquerors ; they invariably incorporated themselves with the inhabitants, and adopted their religion.

The name of that spirit in Hebrew was Abaddon, and in Greck Apollyon, both of which signify *destroyer* ; and the history of the times shows how truly they acted to their character. By this religion they intended to supplant that of Christ. The name Jesus Christ, signifies he that is anointed to save. He is king in his church, and reigns to extend the blessings of salvation. The spirit of Mohamedanism is that of the destroyer : and wherever he reigns he spreads destruction. Christianity is animated with the spirit of love, peace, and salvation ; Mohamedanism by the spirit of the destroyer.

Thus strictly and remarkably the emblems apply to Mohamet, and his system of error. And, further still, we shall be convinced of the remarkable synchronization when we consider,

V. THE SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY HE BORE.

“ The key of the bottomless pit was given to him.” In the Koran, the key of God is said to have been given to the prophet. In the text the key of the bottomless pit, of the abyss from which he drew his error, is said to have been given to him. Mark the strong allusive contrast. Mohamet might have been guided in the use of this expression by an allusion to the key of the Caaba, which designated the prince of Mecca as the chief officer of the Pagan mysteries. By it, he meant to maintain, that he was the chief administrator of the new religion. The holy Spirit, by St. John, distinguishes him by this expres-

sion, as the inventor and head of an abominable superstition and imposture, which had its origin in the bottomless pit. As the cross is made the emblem of Christians, so the key is made the emblem of a great branch of the Mohamedans. Bossuet remarks, hell does not open of itself; it is always some false teacher that sets it open.

We have seen the suitability of the symbols employed by the Apostle, under the direction of the spirit of God, to the rise of Mohamedanism. It now only remains for us to notice a few incidents in the progress of this *woe*, considering the prediction and the fulfilment. If we follow the history of the Arab invasion of Christendom we shall discover the fulfilment of the other announcements contained in the invasion.

1. The words occurring in the symbols give us intimation of a *terrible career of conquest*: of the *rapidity of its movements*—they fly as with wings: of *powerful destruction*, as with lion-like energy; of *cruel torture*—the smart of a scorpion sting.

All this is verified by fact. In 629, the Saracens first proclaimed war; but soon retired. In 636, they re-commenced the contest, and with fresh vigor. In less than three years Syria was subdued. The subjugation of Egypt soon followed, and in about from 20 to 40 years afterwards the whole of the African provinces. At the beginning of the eighth century, Spain fell. In ten years Omar reduced 3,600 cities; destroyed 4000 churches, and built 1400 mosques. At the end of the first century of the Hegira, the Arabian empire reached from the

confines of Tartary and India, to the shores of the Atlantic.

The stinging tortures they inflicted were very universal, and very pungent. The bitter contempt with which they regarded Christians,—the sad degradation to which they reduced them; and the acts of oppression they inflicted upon them, were crushing in the extreme. All these things made life itself a burden, and rendered death desirable, as intimated in the sixth verse.

2. The figures employed in depicting Mohammedan progress, mark the limits proscribed to its devastations; and this also is remarkably verified in its history.

There is first a limit to the *sphere of the devastations* themselves. This remarkably identifies the symbol with the people to whom it is applied, as we have noticed above. They were not to kill the men of Christendom in the manner it was to be done under the second woe (verses 15-18.) Not to annihilate them as a political Christian body; but only to oppress, degrade, and torment them. Gibbon thinks it a matter requiring special notice, how the whole of Christendom was saved from inevitable danger. Hallam observes, these conquests were less perplexing than their cessation. All along they had certain checks by which they were restrained. God had limited their progress,—an unseen power had checked them, and had kept them back. Twice they were unsuccessful in invading Constantinople. And, again in Spain, the Saracens, after having defeated the Visigothic Empire, again attacked, with

the design of destroying them ; but were repulsed with great loss. And yet again, when the Moorish Saracens in 732 swept over the greatest part of Europe, and when it appeared impossible for France to escape, the fall of which would have involved the whole of Europe, then a check was given by Charles Martel. They did not kill, or politically annihilate the whole body of the Christian Church. In attempting to do this they were repulsed. The church still subsisted, but as a degraded, tormented church.

There was, secondly, a limit as to *the time of their triumphant career*. The period of their most successful operations is limited to five months, or 150 days. Their commission, not the period of their existence, was to extend over this space. The 150 days are to be taken as 150 years. There was such a period of 150 years when they were in full power of conquest ; and after which that power ceased.

As is usual in all prophetic epochs, we cannot here fix the date exactly. There are generally several commencing epochs. The difficulty is in fixing upon that which is distinctive. I have fixed upon a different commencement from the one fixed upon by Daubuz, Mr. Elliott, and after him by Dr. Cumming. Mr. E. is at a loss to find a terminatory epoch to correspond with the starting points I have selected. But close inspection might have enabled him to make the discovery, and the commencement and termination I have adopted more completely coincides with the entire history and the phraseology of the vision. In 609 Mohamed began to



preach *privately*. We may not, therefore, make this the starting point, for then he had not power to hurt men. In 612, he publicly announced his mission. We must take it, at least, as late as this date, because there must be a public act to mark an epoch. In 629 the locust armies first issued from the desert to attack Christendom. Perhaps this last date is the most appropriate period of the epoch, as they first then made their decisive attacks on the professed followers of Christ. They did oppress and afflict the Christians of Arabia prior to the latter date; but as they were to hurt men five months, we must anticipate their approach in their antagonistic character, before they can hurt them in any essential manner.

The last date we have mentioned, added to 150, will bring us down to the year 779. Now let us look at the facts of the case, to see if at this date there was a period put to their power of oppression. In 732, Charles Martel defeated the Saracenic armies. Then began their check. Probably this was about 150 years after the prophet began to cogitate the imposture. About the middle of the eighth century they were weakened by internal discords, and a Caliph in the west was established, in opposition to one in the east. The Caliphate was thus divided about 150 years after Mohamet began publicly to preach his delusive doctrines. Afterwards the removal of the capital to the western banks of the Tigris caused those herds to cease their maraudings, and to settle, and the Saracen power declined. This is dated 150 years after Mohamet energetically enforced his doctrine. Mr. Elliott takes

this event in 762, as the terminating period in the prophecy. But this is not entirely complete as a termination. In the year 777, Charles Martel had an application from the partizans of the Abassides, to afford them and the Caliph of Cordova aid. But the party of the Eastern Caliphs were so worsted that they had no hope but in the protection of Charlemagne. That monarch availed himself of such an opportunity of extending his conquests in Spain; and he subdued the greater part of the country. So that about the year 779, the year we mentioned at the commencement of this statement, and just 150 years from the starting point we have fixed upon, they were so far from having power to do hurt that they were obliged to apply to a Christian monarch for aid and protection, and one of their principal divisions was subdued.

Thus ends the prominent notice of a remarkable period in the *first woe*. But this does not mark the whole period of the Saracen power, or the entire cessation of the *woe*. There was still a lingering existence of the woe, which was oscillating towards termination. Perhaps the whole period of this trumpet or woe might extend to 960, 980, or 985. New and independent dynasties were set up in several quarters of the world, until at length the Fatimites set up a claim to the entire Caliphate, and reduced Africa, Egypt and Syria, and established the third Caliphate in opposition to the other two, and finally the Caliphate of Spain was destroyed. These terrible enemies were subdued in Crete, Cicilia, and Antioch and the Greek armies were borne across the Euphrates.

One woe is past—there come two woes more. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. The interval between the fifth and sixth trumpets was a respite through the ninth and much of the tenth century.—The cause of all this suffering was the apostacy of the church in worshipping images. When the professing church was more than usually set against this worship, then the power of the Saracens was diminished. Faithfulness to God, even in a little, wards off many attacks of evil.

Here we conclude for the present.

1. Have we a part in the true church of Christ? Let us not be content to live without.

2. God has revealed himself in the volume of providence. Who can read such events, as those alluded to in this discourse, without seeing the Divine movements?

3. How safe are God's true people—those who are his sealed ones. They cannot be hurt. Apollyon, the destroyer, can do us no harm if we take refuge in the Saviour, and are faithful to him.

## DISCOURSE VI.

### THE SIXTH TRUMPET—THE SECOND, OR TURKISH WOE.

REV. ix. 13-21.—“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 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, 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, 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 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.

THE subject which falls under review in this vision is the sounding of the sixth trumpet. After the trumpet had been sounded, St. John heard a voice from the four horns of the altar giving command to loose the four angels bound in the river Euphrates ; and a commission was given to them to slay the third part of men. They had an army of horsemen, comprized of myriads of myriads, with peculiar equipments, whose action was of a singular character. In the title of this discourse, we have identified all this, which is the second woe, as the *Turkish* woe. And we think the examination of the subject will confirm this decision.

Let us notice,

I. THE CAUSE OF THIS WOE.

1. Sin has brought all the woe into our world that ever was painfully felt. And whenever there has been a particular woe, there had previously been a particular sin as its cause. If God is a consuming fire, we have kindled it; if he be angry, we have moved him to anger.

This appears to be plainly and strongly implied in the imagery of the text. It is material to observe from whence the voice, giving the command, issued. The text says, *one* voice from the *four* horns of the golden altar, or altar of incense. The *locality* of the voice gives us an index to the guilt or sin to be punished. Thus God said to Cain, "the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the *ground*." It was there by violence. So it would appear that the mystic incense altar had been a scene of special guilt, either as profaned or neglected. As the voice was from the four horns, it seems to suggest that there was some guilt respecting some particular ritual in reference to those horns. In the Mosaical ritual there were two atoning services for sins of ignorance, in connexion with the horns of the golden altar, and another in the same connexion—the annual atonement. Some of the blood of the victim was to be put on the horns of the altar, and then a voice of mercy, virtually, issued from it; and instead of causing armies to issue from the Euphrates to destroy, it will destroy those of Sennacherib, and create peace for Israel.

The command seems to suggest that the majority

in Roman Christendom had, at this time, forsaken the Great High-Priest of their profession, as intercessor, offering incense for them; and had betaken themselves to other mediators, and intercessors. This is the fact, as we have seen in noticing the last woe. And as there was no repentance for these apostate acts, so a voice of judgment proceeds from the place of mercy. The High-Priest himself, whose blood had a voice to speak peace, raises it in uttering denunciations.

How awful is the sin of rejecting Christ; and we need not go to apostate Christianity to witness it, but we can see it every where! How sad the case of an altar without the incense of prayer, and praise, and trust, being offered upon it! Hence judgment follows!

## 2. The loosing of the four angels.

What is intended by these angels? Many interpreters say four Turkmen, or Musselmen powers, resident in the country contiguous to the Euphrates; and hence they endeavor to specify that number. But it is only to confuse the subject; for, as they cannot find four such powers acting at that time simultaneously, they fix upon four consecutive bodies, selected from others also engaged at different times. And yet we find there is a specific period assigned for their action which could not apply to several bodies acting consecutively. It is not four nations, or bodies of people, that are intended, for these cannot be found acting contemporaneously at any period, especially from the commencement, which is the data of the transaction; but four angels,

or *four spiritual agencies* or *inducing causes*, setting in motion some earthly agency. The number four, intimated that from every side desolations should come. These spiritual agencies actually stirred up numerous hoards of horsemen. They were, perhaps, the same four angels mentioned in chap. vii. 1, which are introduced here, the figure being slightly altered from the restraint of the winds, to the restraint upon the holders of them. They are said to hold back the four winds that they should not blow on the earth, nor sea, nor any tree, the active being often used for the passive which would signify that they themselves were constrained to curb those gushing torrents of irruption. Here the sixth trumpet angel is commanded to loose them—to free them from their restraint. The same inducing causes—the spirit of ambition and lust of conquest—were in motion among the nations and tribes bordering on the Euphrates; but they were bound, or held dormant—they were not permitted at that time, during the incursions of the Saracens, to act upon the Roman Empire; but yet were kept in readiness upon the spot. They were now to be emancipated, and left to freedom of action; and powerful, malignant, and destructive, were the strokes they dealt upon their devoted foes. The history of the times will furnish the details.

The Seljukean and Othman powers were the earthly agents employed under the angelic.

In the year 1028 Mahmoud of Ghizni died, who during his life had dominion over a vast region in that portion of the world. He was the only power

that could be formidable to the Grecian Empire, but then he was in old age, and his empire was likely to fall in pieces at his death. This gave some repose to the Eastern Empire, and lulled the fears of its governors. At his death his empire did fall in pieces; but the very cause of the Eastern governor's satisfaction was the source of their ruin. In 1038, after the death of Mahmoud, the Turks, descendants of those with whom Justinian had negotiated, and who were resident at Khorasin, between the Himelaya and the Caspian, asserted their independence under Togrul Beg. He being employed by the Caliph of Bagdad was constituted by him the temporal head of the secular power of Islamism. Thus installed and animated by the spirit of fanaticism, he proclaimed hostility against the Eastern Roman Empire. In 1057, they passed the Euphrates for the purpose of commencing operations. In 1071, the emperor was taken prisoner. The empire of this prince was split into four kingdoms, and Roum became an independent kingdom, with Soliman at its head. The other three kingdoms took no part in the contests with the Roman Empire; and that of Roum became the antagonistic power. It pursued its conquests until the empire was threatened with instant destruction. The emperor solicited the aid of the Western power, which occasioned the celebrated Crusades, and which retarded for a time the destruction of the empire. In the next century the Moguls changed the Seljukean dynasty; but still the Turkmans held together their empire,



under the Othman ;—the kingdom was the same, although the dynasty was changed.

It is well established in history that the Provinces of the Eastern Empire fell one after another, until Constantinople alone was left. At last, above 1000 years from its foundation, it was surrounded both on the Asiatic and the European sides, by the hostile army ; and the Turkman Sultan Mohamet second, as the earthly agency, consummated the catastrophe.

Thus was slain, or destroyed, in a political point of view, the *third part* of the Roman empire. This Sultan, the slayer of the third part of the men of Christendom, called himself Hunkier—the slayer of men.

### 3. The number of the horsemen.

Myriads of myriads. Thus the words, “two hundred thousand thousand,” have been read by the best critics. This is probably indefinite, but yet expressive of large numbers. Thus it is said in the Psalms, “the chariots of God are myriads of myriads.” But what is especially noticeable is, the vast number of horsemen. The bulk of the armies of Europe, at that time, was constituted of foot-men, and but few cavalry, or knights ; whereas, the unnumbered multitudes of these invaders were cavalry or horsemen. Gibbon speaks of the *myriads* of the Turkish horse overspreading the Grecian frontier from the Taurus to Erzeroum.

### 4. Their personal appearance and array.

They were cavalry, as before noticed. The riders had breastplates of fire, *i.e.*, of fire colour, and of

jacinth and sulphur ; or of red, blue, and yellow. It is remarkable that the Ottomans, from their first appearance, have had their warlike apparel of red, blue, and yellow.

The heads of the horses were as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths went forth fire, smoke, and sulphur. By these were the third part of men slain. All this, were it literal, would be unnatural, and it is therefore, to be taken in a symbolic sense, betokening the lion-like, haughty and destroying character of the invaders. The name of one of their leaders was Alp Arslans, which signifies *valiant lion*. The name of another of their chiefs was Kilidge Arslans, or *noble lion*. The Turks compare the grand seignior to the lion, and other kings to little dogs.

It is said that these three materials, viz., fire, smoke, and brimstone, are thought to have an allusion to the Turkman's weapons of destruction—to their artillery used against Constantinople. New elements in warfare were about this time introduced, in which gunpowder, cannon and fire-arms, were employed. It was only by means of these that Constantinople was reduced to ruins. Gibbon gives a striking prominence to this fact in his history, and attributes the destruction of the city to the artillery of the Ottomans. "Fortifications (says he) that had stood for ages against the Goth, the Hun, the Vandal, and the Saracen, now fell before this mighty power of cannon." This may again remind us of the extreme and nice accuracy of the Apocalyptic emblems.

The appearance of the horses' tails is remarkably

descriptive of the Turks. "Their power is in their mouth, and in their tails, for they were like serpents having heads, and with them they do injury." The horse tails were associated with the idea of the rulers. Just as the crown in this book, is made the symbol of a conquering Emperor—the diadem of a monarch—the sword of a military Prefect—and the balance of an administrator of justice. So here the horse tail denotes a Turkish ruler. The number of tails a Turk has, is significant of the amount of official power he possesses. A Pasha of *one* tail is the lowest rank—of *three* tails is the highest. The Pashas have standards of one, two, or three horse tails, surmounted by a crescent over each. There is no other nation of the earth that has ever used such an ensign; and none but the divine prescience could ever have predicted this as a future signal.

"And with them they injure,"—or do injustice. So the word may more appropriately be read. And who does not know of the oppression practised by the Turkish Pashas upon Christians! It is a matter of such notoriety that we need not produce instances; otherwise, as they are so abundant, nothing would be more easy.

5. The time during which the commission was to continue.

This is particularly noticed in the text as an hour, a day, a month, and a year: all, added together, make 396 days, 7 hours: and taking a day for a year, they equal 396 years, 106 days; or calculating with decimal and astronomical exactness, as Mr. Elliott has done, 396 years, 130 days. Now this, as

it respects its application to the Turks, is sustained by historical evidence. We learn from a Turkish history that the angels were loosed Jan. 18th, 1057 ; and this, added to 396, brings us down to 1453, and from Jan. 18th to May 29th, of the same year, we have 130 days. This was the exact date of the fall of Constantinople. The exactness of the event cannot but excite our admiration.

In this calculation the year is taken as 365 days, 6 hours, instead of 360 days, which is allowed in other places. But it is remarked that there is a special reason to be assigned for this difference, in the word used in the original. The usual word *Kairos*, which signifies a time, or a season recurring—a special period, is changed, and here *eniautos* is used, which signifies that which returns into itself, or a complete revolution. The former word is more vague—this more definite, intimating the entire time of a complete revolution. This change occurs only in this place in stating prophetic numbers, although in other places it is used to denote an anniversary.

Constantinople was nearly reduced 50 years before it actually fell ; but God, who foresaw all future contingencies, stated in the text the exact time when it would actually fall. At length the time arrived, and the Greek empire was no more. The second capital of Christendom fell for its apostacy. History bears testimony to the fact that whatever nation patronized the Anti-Christian apostacy, has been severely punished. •

But the period of the sixth trumpet did not terminate with the expiration of the commission of the

horsemen; or, otherwise there was a longer space between this and the next action. The ending of the sixth trumpet and the second woe is not mentioned until chap. xi. 14., immediately after the ascension of the witnesses and fall of the tenth part of the city. We find intervals of peace and cessation from chastisements interspersed, allowing space and opportunity for reflection and repentance. The men of Christendom had not repented during the second woe. Nor did the terror of the fall of Constantinople produce any reformation or repentance. The church in the dark ages was only remarkable for their idolatry, worship of demons or spirits of dead men, the Virgin Mary, and other saints;—for fornication, sorcery, thefts, and murders. The inquisition and the crusades against the Waldenses, &c., were remarkable in this age. They repented not of the work of their hands. “For all this his anger was not turned away, but his hand was stretched out still; for the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts,” Isa. ix. 11, 12.

This corrupt state of things continued, and became more and more polluted up to the time of the reformation. And still, wherever the apostacy is adhered to, the same practices are pursued. Is not the appeal necessary in our day, “Cease to do evil: learn to do well.”

How exactly St. John depicted the state of things as they afterwards existed, all history, ecclesiastical and civil, testifies. We feel ourselves in the immediate presence of the prescient Deity as we study the **Apocalypse**.

## DISCOURSE VII.

**THE COVENANT ANGEL—THE LITTLE BOOK—THE SEVEN THUNDERS  
—THE OATH AND DECLARATION—THE COMMISSION—THE AD-  
MEASUREMENT OF THE TEMPLE.**

REV. x. ; xi. 1, 2.—“ And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud : and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the 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, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth : and when he had cried seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write : and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon 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 earth and 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 the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath 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 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 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 before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings. And there was given me a reed like unto a rod : 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 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.

WE have now traced the Anti-Christian apostacy which had arisen in the church, by slow degrees, from the earliest ages of its existence ; but still

more rapidly from the time of Constantine. \* The gradual development of its corruptions has been exhibited. Notwithstanding former inflictions of wrath, and the more recent scourge of two woes, which fell upon them in bitterness, the men of the Roman earth still refused to repent, but grew worse and worse. The church had become so thoroughly corrupt—Christian truth so entirely nullified—the Bible so entirely unknown, that Christ must interpose either to destroy or renovate. He did appear to effect the latter object. The reformation is unquestionably exhibited by vivid symbols in the portion of this book which is quoted as the text. An angel appears;—performs significant actions, and makes impressive declarations. These symbols, we again assert, set forth the nature of the reformation; the whole description answers to the fact.

It will be recollected that we have noticed events, in explanation of the preceding parts of this book, which have evidently brought us down to about the close of the fifteenth and the commencement of the sixteenth century: we must also bear in mind, that this vision still ranges under the sixth trumpet, which, indeed, extends to chap. xi. 14. The seventh trumpet is noticed, as commencing to sound, chap. xi. 15.

Of course it will be understood that the assumption of Anti-Christian power was previous to this, for we have noticed the growing accretions of corruption as we have proceeded; but the symbols representing it are reserved to chap. xiii. This intervention of grace is introduced before the descriptions of

Anti-Christ, because Anti-Christ was not ripe for destruction before these gracious interventions had been manifested; and an opportunity was to be given to all who would obey the call, to repent and come out of Babylon.—We will proceed to examine these symbols. We notice,

1. The person and character of the angel.

Who is this angel? He is said to be mighty—clothed with a cloud—to have a rain-bow upon his head—with his face as the sun—and his feet as pillars of fire. These descriptions would warrant us to affirm that he is the Angel of the Covenant—a manifestation of Christ as the sun of righteousness shedding forth his beams on a gloomy hemisphere. Such a description as that given in this place is not relevant to any created angel. There is here a part of the description ascribed to this angel which is given of Christ in chap. i. 15. No created angel is ever represented as clothed with a cloud. On the contrary a cloud is the ensign of Deity, (Ps. civ. 3; 2 Sam. xxii. 12, &c.) He speaks of the two witnesses as *his* witnesses. The whole action noticed of him shows him to be the Lord Jesus Christ. The only objection to this decision is, that he swore by the creator. But does not God swear by himself? and the circumstance of Christ's appearing as an angel—the angel of the covenant--would preclude his swearing by himself. In his official character it was proper for him to swear by the creator. If this were an objection, the same would take away much of his authority as God, in his state of humiliation.

2. The object of the intervention.



The object he contemplated was the vindication of his own honor, and the revelation of his grace in the Gospel. There is an allusion to something which opposed him. It seems to imply some sudden enlightening, and world arousing interference of Christ. The verbal expressions of a prophecy uttered from heaven have always some action answering to them on earth. Nothing answers to this but the reformation. If ever there was an interposition of Divine providence and grace, this was, and that event absorbs the whole of the prediction. The sixteenth century opened the reformation.

Thus Christ revealed himself, and he was discovered by his servant, for at this time Luther arose, and he discerned Christ as the *only* Saviour—as the angel of the covenant, according to the representation given in the text. Some time afterwards he discovered Anti-Christ, the usurper. He had found a Bible, and from it he saw his state as a sinner before God. He was brought into distress of mind as a sinner ; and after severe exercises of soul was led to discover Christ as his Saviour, and by believing in him, his soul was made exceedingly happy in the pardon of sin, and in the enjoyment of the favor of God.

The truth of the Gospel is further discovered to us by the representation of a *little book open in the Angel's hand*. John, the representative of the Christian ministry, is commanded to take the little book out of the Angel's hand, and to eat it up. Various opinions have existed as to what that little book prefigured. But passing by every other conjec-

ture, I am inclined to the opinion that it symbolized either the New Testament or the Old and New Testaments together—the whole Bible. This book testifies of Christ. It had long been a closed book; and it was forbidden to be read. Luther, although a student from his boyhood, had never seen a copy;—he met with one, as by a mere chance, so to speak, in his early manhood. Thus the text shows, by a symbolization of remarkable coincidences, that Christ would be discovered to enlighten and save mankind, and that this would be in connexion with his own book being delivered to his evangelist, and the contents of it preached by them to the people.

### 3. The voice of the seven thunders.

When the angel cried out with a loud voice, then the seven thunders uttered their *own* voices. What is the signification of the seven thunders? There has been much perplexity felt by expositors on this subject, and their solutions have been very unsatisfactory. Some have supposed that from the charge given to St. John, “Seal up these things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not,” that we are to have no kind of idea concerning the nature of the subject. But if so, why is the subject introduced into a series of *revelations*? There have been various conjectures among commentators, both ancient and modern, as to what the matter uttered consisted in; for allusion to which I cannot find space. But looking strictly at the circumstances of the case, we may conclude that they were utterances which occurred about the time of the reformation. They are said to have had voices

and to speak, for St. John was about to write them : they were, therefore, intelligible to him. This is a distinction from other thunders, mentioned in this book. We shall do right to conclude that they were symbolizations of actual events. St. John was so far mistaken as to their true impart and authority, that he was about to write them down as a part of the true revelation communicated to him ; but was absolutely forbidden to do so, for this was not their character. The thunders are said to utter their *own* voices, for this is the literal rendering of the passage. In chap. xxi. 5, it was said to him, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." Here, it appears, that although the voices had the appearance of a true oracle from heaven, in reality they were not such : not the voice of the spirit but false utterances.

Thus the voices appear in direct contrast to the voice of the covenant angel, and were like a lion roaring. This fact suggests that they were the voice of Anti-Christ. The Bulls and Decretals of the Popes were regarded as oracles from heaven. They have, in fact, often been denominated *Papal thunders* ; and what strengthens this opinion is, that those communications are alluded to as *the seven thunders*, as being well defined and well known. And many a prince, and many a potentate has trembled at their utterance.

They are designated the *seven thunders* from the *seven hills*, from whence they issued ; just as Euripides designates the oracular light from the *Parnassian summits*, "the two topped lightning."

As soon as Luther published his theses, and when a Papal bull thundered against them, he was about to admit the validity of the Pope's voice as the voice of Christ. At that time he recognized the Pope, respected his authority, and was ready to bow to his mandate. He was thus about to admit the authenticity of the thunders, as though they were a voice from heaven. "I will obey the voice of the Pope, (says he) as the voice of God." In the text, St. John is to be regarded, in his symbolical character, as typical of the ministry of the times, especially so of Luther, the chief in the movements. He was about to write, but was forbid to record the voices, as expressions of God's revealed will. By Divine providence and grace, Luther was given to see that the mandates of the Pope were not the voice of God; but that the Pope was Anti-Christ. He first discovered that indulgences were a contradiction to the word of God; and was forced to identify the Pope himself as connected with these Anti-Christian abuses. After this he was led to examine the origin, foundation, and character, of the Papal supremacy, and saw its true character. "I know not (says he) whence these thoughts come to me." They were the voice of God. These convictions were forced upon him progressively and gradually, but in the end they were thorough; until at length he did a bold act, at which all Europe was terrified. He summoned a vast concourse of all ranks of people outside the walls of Wittemberg, kindled a fire, and by the hands of the common

hangman committed the bull, with the Papal decretals, canons, &c., to the flames.

4. The procedure and conduct of the angel.

In the two former figurations we have traced the two grand discoveries made by Luther, viz, that Christ was the only source of salvation, and that the Pope was Anti-Christ. We now proceed to another distinct emblem, viz. the Angel placing his feet upon the sea and the land, and the utterance of an oath. We will notice them distinctly.

1. His action and attitude.

His feet were placed in these positions, and his hand lifted up to heaven to assert his sovereignty over the whole world.

This action of the angel seems to be in allusion and by way of contrast to some notorious usurpator of his rights. Anti-Christ usurped the rights of Christ, and about this time these usurpations were introduced in a prominent manner by Leo, who made the most extravagant and the most blasphemous claims.

The angel cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth. In opposition to this Leo uttered his anathemas, as with the voice of a lion. And it is remarkable that he made choice of a name by which to designate himself as Pope as if in allusion to the same fact, and in addition to this he actually took the title of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah." The world trembled at this roaring lion. Luther, the servant of Jesus Christ, maintained the truth by a clear, strong testimony, uttered in a manly and strenuous manner in opposition to Tetzal, and afterwards to the Pope

himself. This was done so effectually as to make him, in his turn, tremble on the seven hills, from which he issued his own thunders.

There were many more assumptions of the Pope, of which several were introduced about this time.

He assumed the title of the Vicar of Christ: he professed to pardon sin, and to open and to shut heaven. He styled himself lord of the worlds, and his votaries styled him our Lord God the Pope. In some paintings Leo is represented with refulgent rays of light, and with a rain-bow in the air radiating a landscape. Again, by the same artist, he is represented with one foot on the land, and with another on the sea. In contrast with this the angel of the covenant is represented in the text with precisely these appearances and attitudes; and thus he asserts and vindicates his claims. How singular that the Pope of that day should chose such modes of representations, just at the very time to which the emblems of the text allude. Here then, Christ and Anti-Christ stand in entire opposition to each other, with a caveat on the part of our Lord against the audacious assumptions of Anti-Christ. And how striking that at such a time a champion should appear to undertake the vindication of the claims of his Lord and master. Does not all this show the exact appropriateness of the figures to the time and subject assigned them in this interpretation?

## 2. His oath and declaration.

He lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by the creator of all things, concerning the definite time for the fulfilling of the mystery of God.

The declaration stands in our version, "Time should be no longer." This is rendered by most expositors, "that the time should not yet be ; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel (whensoever he should be about to sound) then the mystery of God should be finished according to the declaration of the prophets." For it could not be said that time, in its absolute sense, should be no longer, as there was still to be the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the many transactions that trumpet indicated. But when he says there shall be but one intervening trumpet, before the fulfilment of the mystery of God we clearly understand what there is yet to be accomplished in the world before the end comes.

Thus understood, it foretells the fact of the certain approach and nearness—at the distance of but one more grand prophetic epoch—of the long promised consummation, the ending of the mystery of God—his mystery of *providence*, where things have appeared out of course—his mystery of *prophecy*, in which things were but darkly and enigmatically unfolded. There is a similar representation in Daniel The man clothed in linen, held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times and an half, (chap. xii. 7.) St. John might have had this vision before his mind, as undoubtedly the angel had ; for he was the *same being* in either case. In the former case the angel swore that the event predicted should not be until a time, times, and an half ; but here that there should intervene but one trumpet. According to this, considering St. John's

representative character, there ought, in point of fact, to have been some impressions on the mind of Luther and of his coadjutors, of the near approach of the end of all things. The fact is, that in those days there was a strong and almost general excitement from the impression that the consummation of all things was at hand. The Papists were so intoxicated with the splendor of the new Pope that they thought the latter day glory was nigh at hand, to be realized in the Pope's universally extending empire. The reformers seeing that Popery was the Anti-Christ of prophecy, thought the time had come for his destruction, and the consequent reign of righteousness. But they were here taught that there was to be an intervening trumpet; although from their ardent desire and expectation, they had not sufficiently fixed upon the numerous events depicted by that Trumpet.

5. Another step in the *reformation* is predicted by the *commission* given by Christ to faithful ministers of the Gospel, to preach its contents in various languages and countries. After John took the little book, it was said to him, "thou must prophesy again." A difficulty ensued, namely the want of what is called orders. It was thought there must be a bishop, in regular succession, to ordain; Luther felt this. In after days Wesley felt the same difficulty. But subsequently they both saw this was mere straw and chaff. Here Christ teaches his church that *his commission is authority*. He seems to say to Luther, let not this dogma prevent thee from sending forth my heralds.



The term, "to prophesy," signifies to perform the work of the ministry, and not to begin a new series of prophecies, as some maintain is the sense here. The word used here is the same as the Septuagint uses for the occurring Hebrew word; and Gesenius gives as its first meaning, "to speak as God's ambassador." Thus it is not restricted to the prediction of future events. This latter sense, we allow, is its meaning in many of the New Testament passages; and this is its meaning in chap. xi. 3. "I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy." But here it is to be taken in the sense we first gave.

The action particularly refers to Martin Luther and the ministers of the reformation. He was to digest the Gospel in his own heart, and communicate its contents to the people. And this was precisely the case with Wesley and his coadjutors at the second reformation. Their souls were full of the Gospel, and they seized every opportunity of declaring it. The command implied some notable previous suspension, or interruption of this work of preaching, and the numerous impediments which were thrown in their way to prevent it; which were indeed the facts of the case in those times. But notwithstanding these difficulties, at this time, there was a revival of Gospel preaching.

During Luther's imprisonment for one year, he took the little book, and translated the New Testament into German; and then on his liberation he "prophesied again," and translators of the Scriptures as well as preachers, were multiplied.

6. The next particular which claims our attention is the constitution and definition of evangelical and reformed churches, to the exclusion of the apostate church of Rome. This subject is contained in chap. xi. 1, 2. "And there was given me a reed—rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein," &c. The temple, throughout this book, is to be considered symbolical of the Christian church universal—the holy of holies, and its company and worship, symbolizes that part of the universal church which is already gathered into paradise. The other parts of the temple, and the worshippers—the church on earth, and its members. The holy place may be regarded as figuring the secret, spiritual worship and character of the church on earth. The altar-court, and its worshippers, prefigure the church in respect to its visible and public worship. . And here we have the outer court, or court of the Gentiles, which is the symbolic scene of non-spiritual, or nominal members, who had forsaken true Christianity, and had become apostates.

To measure the altar-court signifies that the reforming ministers were to regulate and constitute the reformed church, and to define its vital doctrines. The adjustment and regulation of a symbolical temple is employed by Ezekiel to signify the revival of the true church, its establishment and perfection in the latter days. By these acts all apostates are shown to be excluded from the true church of Christ.—The *rod* signified the badge of ecclesiastical authority.

The established religion in Saxony, as well as

elsewhere, was Papal Romish. Now steps were to be taken to abolish the most prominent superstitions of the Papacy. Still the necessity was felt for a regular ecclesiastical arrangement and construction of the Lutheran church. Means of forming a fund for the support of ministers, schools and hospitals, were acquired; and speedily by the consent, and with the concurrence of the Elector, the church was regularly established. This was the true church of the time. The Romish church was divided from it, intimated in the text by leaving the court without the temple unmeasured, to be trodden down of the Gentiles forty-two months. Thus they were to exclude all that was Romish from the true church. The example of Saxony was followed by other reforming states.

Shortly afterwards, viz., in 1525, at the Diet of Augsburg, all these points were precisely regulated. In 1530, the celebrated *confessions of faith* were confirmed as the standards of the churches.

Thus we behold the RE-FORMATION OR *new constitution* of the church. The reformation contained the seeds of all that is vital in the true church of Christ. The Bible opened—private judgment—a free publication of the Gospel—the unadulterated truth proclaimed.

It is the duty of every man to be a reformer, in the best sense of the term. To see that he possesses personal religion according to the standard of truth. It is his duty to remove sin far from him personally, and to endeavor to spread the truth. Let us do all in our power to promote a revival of true religion

every where. And let us be thankful that God, in his good providence and grace, has removed this mass of corruption from his church, and that now his pure word and doctrine prevail.



## DISCOURSE VIII.

THE TWO WITNESSES—THEIR DEATH, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION—THE EARTHQUAKE—THE FALL OF THE TENTH PART OF THE CITY—THE SLAYING OF SEVEN CHILLIADS OF MEN—EFFECTS ON THE FAITHFUL, AND ON THE UNFAITHFUL.

REV. xi. 3-19—“ And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing 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. 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. 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 was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer 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 them that dwelt on the earth. And after three days and a 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. 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 beheld 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. The second woe is past ; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel 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 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 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, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest 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 opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

THIS passage forms a supplementary, retrospective, and explanatory narrative, which also brings us down to the point where the last discourse closed, viz., to the reformation; and in which there is included a notice and summary of the transactions under the seventh trumpet.

God has always had witnesses to his truth, but more especially this has occurred when religion has been particularly obscured and corrupted. Having arrived at the Reformation in these prophetic disclosures, the Apostle is taught to take a backward glance of the eminent persons that had formerly arisen to testify of the truth during the long and sickening progress of corruption which had occurred in the church. And it is a remarkable coincidence that the reformers themselves began to take a retrospective view of such persons, who, like themselves, had maintained it. One of their number drew up a “catalogue of witnesses.” And Foxe about the same time published his “book of martyrs.”

Let us proceed to survey the several notable particulars contained in this portion of this book.

1st. The description of the *character of the witnesses*.

The Greek word *martus* and *martur* (witnesses) is the root of our word martyr. And to preach and profess Christ in that age was equivalent to becom-

ing a martyr, in the popular sense of the term. This appears to have been the reason why the word martyr was adopted to signify those who sealed the truth with their blood.

As to the *identity* of the witnesses, numerous and conflicting opinions are maintained. One writer, presumed to be Faber, considers them to be the civil and religious democracy, slain by Louis XVI. in 1789; and that their resurrection took place in the person of Napoleon. By several writers they are declared to be the Old and New Testaments. But that they are persons, not things, appears from the consideration, that the word occurs in the Bible 34 times, and in the other 33 places it signifies a person; and why should it not mean so in the 34th? Why should this be the only exception? To prophesy, we have remarked in the former discourse, is to preach, and this is the act of a person, and not of a thing. Christ calls them his witnesses. They proclaimed and vindicated the perfect atonement of Jesus, in opposition to all ritual efficacy. They overcame the accuser of the brethren by the word of their testimony, and by the blood of the Lamb. They protested against all that would depreciate the efficacy of the atonement, against the prevailing heresy of the period in which they lived.

They are denominated the *two olive trees*, and the *two candlesticks* or *lamp stands*. Candlesticks in the Apocalypse means a church. Our Saviour expressly says the seven candlesticks are the seven churches.

What do the two olive trees signify? Evidently



something in connection with the church, for they were to feed the candlesticks with oil. Mr. Elliott, and after him Dr. Cumming, declare them to be the ministers of the church, through whom she is supplied with instruction. This appears very natural, and yet, I am persuaded, it is not the thing intended. In the prophecies of Zechariah, they are represented as the *sources* of supply for the lamps. Ministers are but the *conduits*, not the source. They are literally termed the sons of oil, or communicators of oil. I believe they refer to the source from whence the true oil, or unction, is supplied to the church. The Holy Spirit is made the receptacle of all the grace of Christ, and for the purpose of imparting it to mankind. Now what is that source from whom the Holy Spirit receives this grace to impart to men? Or what are the two olive trees? Zechariah asked that question, and the angel explains them as the two anointed ones which stand by the Lord of the whole earth. This evidently alludes to the sacerdotal and regal offices of our Lord Jesus Christ, the king and prophet of his church, through whom alone the oil of grace is imparted to his church, by the medium of the Holy Spirit. Christ stands before God, in his official character, as king and priest, to claim this grace for the church. There were seven pipes from the bowl to the seven lamps. Every church has a pipe to it, communicating with this source. All receive from the Spirit, of the provisions procured by Christ's sacrificial death. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." (See Zech. iv. chap.)

Here is the hope and comfort of the church. "By my spirit, saith the Lord," shall every purpose respecting the renovation of man be carried forth. What is to be accomplished, is to be accomplished by the Holy Spirit. No human means, without him, can effect any thing. Christ stands before the throne of God as Mediator, and the seven spirits, or the Holy Spirit in his seven fold, or perfect capacity, is before the throne at all times, ready to execute his office.

Here then we perceive that the church, as a company of living witnesses for Jesus, is represented as filled with the Holy Spirit; and from that community numerous gifted and qualified persons arise and testify of his grace and power. The more the church is influenced by the Holy Spirit the more ready will her members be to bear record of the saving power of Christ. May God ever bestow upon his church this high qualification in rich effusions.

2nd. Their *number* is referred to.

Two witnesses are distinctly named. In the institutions of Moses two witnesses were required to substantiate any fact. In reality, there has been scarcely ever a solitary witness in the church. They have generally been raised up in pairs, as is instanced in the cases of Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb, Huss and Jerome of Prague, Luther and Melancthon, Wesley and Whitfield. Our Lord always sent his disciples by two together. Thus they render each other mutual support and encouragement.

But, perhaps, the symbol refers, in a great measure, to churches. They are the two lamp stands,

*i.e.*, the two churches. Roman Christendom was divided into two churches; and in each of these divisions there was a witnessing church, a line of witnesses in each. In the East there were the Paulikians, and in the west the Waldenses. Each of these existed from the days of Augustine, to the day of Luther. Many eminent men appeared, at different times, in each of these sections, in this character. The British churches, early in these witnessing ages, furnished many eminent examples of devoted and distinguished men, who strenuously opposed image and saint worship, and the efficacy of ritual observances, and who zealously propagated the truth in regions beyond them.

3rd. The *condition* of the witnesses is expressed by their prophesying in sack cloth, which is the symbol of mourning and distress. It was usual to put on sack cloth when under deep grief and fearful apprehensions of danger. These witnesses performed their office subject to persecution and death by martyrdom.

4th. The *avenging power given them against their enemies*.

They had means of defence. "If any will hurt them fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and he must in this manner be killed." They should have power also to shut heaven, to turn waters to blood, and to smite the earth with plagues. Here is an allusion to the prerogatives of Moses and Aaron, who turned the waters of the Nile into blood; and to Elijah, who commanded fire to come down from heaven to consume his op-

ponents, and who shut up heaven three years and a half, that it did not rain. These two persons appeared to Christ on the mount of transfiguration. But here it refers to their spiritual power. The prediction that there should be no rain for 1260 years, is not to be taken literally, but figuratively and spiritually, as a spiritual drought. During those dark ages there was no general outpouring of the Holy Spirit. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord, and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north sea to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of our Lord, and they shall not find it." (Amos viii. 11.) The fire going out of their mouth is, in all probability, the symbol of God's fiery judgments, coming down upon their enemies, and often in direct connection with interference with themselves. God's judgments have often specially fallen upon persecutors. "I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and the people wood, and it shall devour them," (Jer. v. 14.) The pretensions of Anti-Christ were, "we shut heaven against them; we send fire to consume them." Now, says Christ, the pretensions of Anti-Christ are all assumption; but the prerogative of my witnesses is real. Their word shall be the savour of life, or of death: of death to their adversaries.

5th. The *duration*\* of their prophecy.

This was to be 1260 days. This was the same period of forty-two months mentioned in the last

discourse, as the period of time during which the temple (the church) was to be trodden down of the Gentiles, (the apostate church,) also the period the Anti-Christian apostacy was to continue. During this dark and dreary period the afflicted church was to be cheered with the presence of the witnesses of God's truth. These are not to be understood as literal days, but to be constructed on the *year-day* system. The commencement was from the time of the clear and decisive establishment of that apostacy. And, although this is hard and difficult to exactly identify, yet, about the sixth century, their assumption certainly required an antidote. Gibbon says, "The use, and even worship of images, was firmly established before the end of the sixth century." I do not intend to trace the history of these witnesses, or to give specimens of their testimony; they may be found in ecclesiastical histories. I will notice, however, that one of the earliest of those eminent individuals, after Augustine, and Vigilantius, who so early testified of the vital doctrines of Christianity, viz., in 529, was Cæsarius of Arles, in Dauphine, who decisively testified of the truth, against the gross errors of the times. These witnesses successively arose, both in the east and in the west. The number of those blessed men may be supposed when we notice that in the east, under the reign of one monarch (the Empress Theodosia) 100,000 were put to death. The Paulikians in the east, and the Albigenes and Waldenses in the west, each produced vast numbers of faithful men, who bore witness to the truth; and multitudes suffered

martyrdom. We sometimes speak of the noble army of martyrs; but little do we imagine the vast numbers of which it is composed, and their real nobility, and the moral heroism they displayed. May we possess that noble tenacity of the truth, and that ardent zeal in its diffusion which will make us come up, as far as we are at present called, to their spirit.

6th. The *war* made upon them.

“When they have completed their testimony, the beast shall make war against them, and shall overcome them and kill them.” From this account, it might be understood that the time of this contest would be at the close of their testimony, and that then it would cease. But the Gospel was not to become finally extinct at any such period. Neither is it evident that this war was to commence at the close of the 1260 years. The words, when literally rendered, mean as they are in the course of fulfilling, or, of the completion of their mission. They were continually, and successively fulfilling a testimony.

The *beast* is here mentioned parenthetically: but he is afterwards made the subject of two supplemental chapters, (chap. xiii. xvii.) and is there fully described. He actually did make war against them by the acts of several councils, especially that of the third Lateran Council of 1179, and by those of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They suffered local persecutions. At first the Inquisition denounced them and confiscated their goods; afterwards sanguinary wars were carried on against the Paulikians, and crusades against the Waldenses were vigorously

carried forth, and multitudes of accessions were gained to the noble army of martyrs.

7. The defeat and death of the witnesses.

Here they are not to be considered as two individuals, but as continuous bodies; and, therefore, we are not to look for the martyrdom of two individuals, but for a continuous series of exterminations. The term witnesses is figurative, being to be taken as a succession of persons; and, consequently, their death must also be figurative, viz., as *the extinction of their testimony*. There was one period, in the history of Christendom, when there was a pause made in their testimonies. In the beginning of the eleventh century the power and licentiousness of the Roman Pontiffs were beyond all precedent, and the persecutions of all real Christians were carried on with vigilance. The Waldenses were too feeble, from the great destruction upon them by the crusades, to resist the Popedom; and the Hussites were reduced to silence, and Europe reposed in the deep sleep of spiritual death. This is the testimony of all who have written respecting those times.

8. The *exposure of their dead bodies*.

They were to lie in the street of the city, spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where our Lord was crucified. What do these names import? Evidently spiritual Babylon, or literal Rome. It might well be called Sodom for its corruption, and Egypt for its oppressions of the people of God. And yet it is not merely the city of Rome, but the Politico-Ecclesiastical state, the ten kingdoms of which it was formed, and in contradistinction of the city of

God. Quesnel called Rome Egypt and Sodom. Grostete called Roman despotism, Egyptian bondage. There, it is said, our Lord was crucified. St. Paul, addressing the Hebrews, concerning those who fall away, says, "they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." (Heb. vi. 6.) Rome is the capital of that ecclesiastical polity. Gibbon says, "the nations began once more to seek, on the banks of the Tiber, the laws and the oracles of their fate." Ver. 9, speaks of those in this city as, "they of all people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations;" all were represented there, in the great council.

Their dead bodies shall lie in the streets of the city. The word is *plateia*, the broad street, or place, chief square, or open place of a city: among the Jews near the city gate; and in other places, the market place, or forum; and it is often mentioned as the place of judgment. They of the people, &c., shall see: not the people, but they of the people, *i.e.*, their representatives, in a general council. This was verified as follows: During the years 1512 to 1514, the great council of the Lateran was held under Julius II. and Leo X. One of the leading objects of this council was the extirpation of heresy and heretics; or, in the language of the Apocalypse, the death of the witnessess. The Hussites, or Bohemians were summoned to appear. But they were so dispirited and so disheartened that *not one did appear*. The *testimony of the witnesses was suppressed*. The fact was proclaimed in the council; and it was added, "*heresy is dead*." Thus, as it were writing



their epitaph, their testimony was supposed to be finished.

“They from the kindreds, tribes, &c., shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put into graves.” This was often literally the case ; and a decree from this council actually prohibited the interment of any who should be found dead. But the expression in its full completion is, of course, symbolic, as the witnesses themselves were. And this may denote the special contempt, insult, and ignominy, with which their testimony was treated.

9. *The rejoicings at their death.*

This circumstance is recorded in ver. 10, and it had a literal accomplishment. Leo received congratulations and gifts on the occasion from various realms, especially a munificent one from Portugal : and in consideration of this, he made a donation in return to Portugal of the sovereignty of the great part of India. Splendid fetes were given in consequence of this great event. Joy was prevalent at the breaking up of the council.

10. *The resurrection of the witnesses.*

“After three and a half days the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet.” As the representation is symbolical, so they lived again in the appearance of others in their circumstances. And this was fulfilled by the appearance of Luther as a witness for Jesus.

This event took place exactly three and a half years after the council separated. May 5th, 1514, the council proclaimed, “heresy is dead.” And in October 31st, 1517, Martin Luther made the first pro-

clamation of the Gospel by posting his theses upon the gates of the church of Wittenberg. From 1514 to 1517 is three years: from May 5th to October 31st is precisely 180 days, or half a literal year, the number specified to a day. How precisely exact is the fact to the prediction!

“Great fear fell upon all which saw them.” We are all familiar with the consternation of all Europe at Luther’s bold proceedings; and, especially of that of the Ecclesiastics who were his special opponents. Pope Adrian exclaimed in 1528, “the preachers, Huss and Jerome, are now alive again in the person of Martin Luther.” Luther and his associates were called Protestants, *i.e.*, according to the Latin etymology, witnesses.

#### 11. Their *ascension to heaven*.

The heaven intended, according to the figurative language of the Apocalypse, is that of political power and dignity. This was a heaven seen by their observers. This may be illustrated by a reference to the language of Nebuchadnezzar, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north,” (Isa. xiv. 13.) By this he meant he would exercise supreme and unlimited power. The expression in the text signifies that the witnessing churches should obtain great national and civil power. By the pacification of Nuremberg, the Protestant church came to be considered as a political body of no small importance. At the peace of Passau in 1557, they were admitted to civil power; invested with

political privileges, and were made members of the supreme imperial chamber.

It is said that "their enemies beheld them." The prelates and priests of Rome, who saw their ascent, were exasperated at the spectacle. They had endeavored to keep the Bible closed, but it was open notwithstanding—it was open in palaces—it was read by princes, and the Gospel was listened to by Potentates.

12. The *earthquake* which happened the same hour.

This was a more spiritual event. It denotes that which actually occurred, a disruption in the power and dominion of the Roman ecclesiastical hierarchy—a moral earthquake. Saxony, Prussia, Sweden, and Denmark, renounced the Roman sway, and formed themselves into Protestant independent churches. The shock of this disruption would be dreadful and appalling to the Romanists.

13. The *fall of the tenth part of the city*.

In addition to the earthquake, otherwise the alienation of the above named kingdoms, the tenth part of the city fell, but not so suddenly as those places, so as to come under the denomination of an earthquake. The Roman Papal Empire was divided into *ten* great divisions. Daniel and St. John both notice this division, and which we shall consider more particularly when we proceed further with these visions. *Great Britain* was one of the ten. It is here stated that a tenth part of the Poppedom fell. After some struggles *Great Britain* was separated from Rome. The separation commenced

under Henry VIII., and was consummated under Edward VI., from 1546 to 1553. In 1560 Scotland was separated from Rome; but this must be included in Great Britain, as part of the same island, and shortly afterwards included in the same government.

14. The *slaying of seven thousand men.*

This event was connected with the earthquake. In the Greek text it is *seven chiliads, the names of men.* In the Old Testament the chiliads denote *princedom*s; and the passage may be illustrated by advert- ing to the customs of the Hebrews. Moses, at the advice of his father-in-law, divided the tribes of Israel into thousands, and placed a leader, captain, or prince, over each thousand. These, once divided, were no longer regulated by numbers, but remained permanent sections, irrespective of that considera- tion; and if the division increased, it became famous, or if it decreased, it was less noted. When the land of Canaan was divided, localities were assigned to each of these thousands; and they and their princes and localities were denominated, "the thousands of Israel," and were famous according to their importance. Thus it is said, "but thou Beth- lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands (Sep. the chiliads) of Judah". This is quoted by the Evangelist, as little among the *princes*, by which we see they were convertible terms, and signified the same thing—chiliads of names of men; as men of renown, or name. The seven chiliads were, therefore, seven principalities, each with their ruler. They were endowed with sepa-

rate government, but not of the style of kingdoms.

Was it then the fact that seven provinces, or a septenary of subdivisions, were actually separated from Rome by this great earthquake? It was so. After England and Scotland had followed Germany, and the other kingdoms before mentioned, the seven Provinces of the Netherlands, which had been hitherto subject to Spain, and adherents of the Papacy, declared their independence. These provinces, with their ruling Dukes, separated from Rome at the same time, and became the Protestant republic of Holland.

It is added, they--the Romanists--became affrighted. They began to think the day of retribution was come.

15. *The glory which resulted to God.*

When the witnesses were elevated to civil dignity, the remnant of the apostacy that saw their advancement trembled at the sight, and they gave glory to the God of heaven. Thus it stands in our version. But the idiom of the Greek gives the sense thus, "they (the Papists) were affrighted; and they (the witnesses) gave glory to God," for the term seems the nominative to the last clause. The Protestant Christians, in all the portions of the reformation, felt that all the glory ought to be given to God for their emancipation and advancement to civil liberty. Not to Luther--to Calvin--to Knox--to Cranmer, but to God,—and not as the Papists do on any advantage gained—to the saints, or to the Virgin Mary. They saw a Divine hand in all these

operations, and cried, "not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be all the glory."

The *second* woe is past, and behold the *third* woe cometh quickly. At the close of the sixth discourse we noticed that the period of the sixth trumpet did not terminate with the expiration of the commission of the horsemen, and here we have a notification of the termination of the second woe, which terminates also the sixth trumpet. The Turks were no longer a woe to Christendom: they were checked and restrained, and had come to a state of decay, and continued to do so more and more. Notwithstanding the recent acts of valour, and their renewed vigor, it does not appear that they will ever again oppress Christianity. They are now brought under the surveillance of the Christian powers, and seem to move at their suggestion, which may, possibly, finally result in their becoming merged in Christianity.

Immediately there follows *the sounding of the seventh trumpet*: but before the development of its contents is treated, there are concurrent matters to be disposed of. Another chapter respecting the spiritual state of the church, and two others on the rise and fall of the beast, intervene. Under this trumpet the third woe does not form a distinctive figuration; but yet the entire contents mark one scene of woe.

On the sounding of this trumpet, great voices proclaim, "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." This is a kind of preliminary and summary statement of

the matter, taken up, and allowed to rest again, until the other matters before mentioned are disposed of, as an intimation of what will be effected under the seventh trumpet. It is believed to be stated by anticipation and a summary of circumstances which were to take place under this symbol. All these matters are afterwards minutely dwelt upon. And in fact this object was itself strongly *anticipated by the reformers*, and seems to be here noticed as an expression of their feelings and hopes. We shall, then, at present, pass by the particulars here noticed, to be resumed when they come up under their fuller development. We shall only urge upon all, that when they contemplate the *retrospective*, or whether they *anticipate the future*, to endeavor to emulate the heavenly host in giving glory and thanks to God. It is evident we live in a world of mercy—a world redeemed by Christ; and that he is at work in the world, accomplishing his own designs and purposes. “He must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet; and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

But let the subject of this discourse remind us that we ought to be witnesses for Christ. We should be anxious to show to all around that he is the only Saviour. We should do our utmost to bring men to him. God will bless us in such a work, and we shall see the fruit of our labors. May the time be hastened when Christ shall reign universally. Amen.

## DISCOURSE IX.

### THE CHURCH'S EXALTATION—PERSECUTION AND RETIREMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL PORTION OF IT INTO THE WILDERNESS.

REV. xii.—xiv. 1-5.—“ And there appeared a great wonder in heaven : 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, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven ; 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 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 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. 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. 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 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. • • • • And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from 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 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 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 first fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God."

DURING the times of apostacy, so clearly traced in the preceding portions of the Apocalypse, the Holy Spirit, in his revelation of the events of these times, has been very exact in placing before us symbols of the true and living church of Christ. I may instance in the subject of the last discourse—the witnesses, and in the sealing vision previously introduced. We have here another representation of the same character—a woman in the wilderness. This emblem, and that of the witnesses, exhibit one and the same condition, and refer to the same time, as is evident by the chronological note of 1260 days. The existence of the beast is also during the same period, and consequently all these periods will run out together. When the Anti-Christian usurpation shall cease, the troubles and afflictions of the church will cease also.

This chapter is still retrospective; or, it contains a retrogressive view of circumstances which have been reviewed under other emblems. The portions of the revelations contained in chaps. xii., xiii., xiv., consist of supplemental matter, supposed to have

been written on the outer side of the Apocalyptic scroll, and to contain matters which could not be fully treated of without interrupting the narrative; this arrangement allows the main stream of the prophecy to be uninterruptedly continuous and progressive. But still the circumstances needed a particular consideration. Retrogressions are quite usual in history, and are designed to answer similar purposes to those now noticed. The corresponding periods written within, are chaps. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

The subjects contained in this supplemental part are of the deepest interest to the church; and, especially so at this time, when we are very probably, so near to their fulfilment. The church needs to be awake.

St John saw a great *wonder* in heaven, or a great *sign*. He saw every thing in figure, or enigma. Here he saw the church under the figure of a woman. So sign is used chap. xv. 1.

1st. What is intended to be prefigured by the *travailing woman*?

Papists, Puseyites, and even some true Protestants, say the Virgin Mary is intended to be signified as bringing forth the Lord Jesus Christ. But she did not retire into the wilderness with Christ. To apply it to her would be contrary to fact. For neither would any of the other circumstances coincide with the history of our Lord, or of his mother. And supposing this to be the case, it would not be a sign, or enigma, but a literal transaction.

The Futurists say, it signifies the bringing in (the second time) of the first begotten into the world; or,

in other words, the Second Advent of Christ. But in this they are not consistent with themselves, for Christ will not then be persecuted, he will not then flee into the wilderness. According to their statements, he will come to reign and triumph, and the dragon will not then seek to destroy the progeny of the woman; for he will be shut up in the bottomless pit.

With many expositors we would say, the woman is a figuration of the real church of Christ—the same holy company we have often traced through these visions, and especially so in the last—the washed and sealed witnessing people of God—the 144,000—the church of the first born whose names are written in heaven.

In the Old Testament, Sion often appears in the image of a woman. In the Songs of Solomon, and in the Revelations, she is spoken of as the spouse of Christ, bearing the close and dear connection of the bride, the Lamb's wife. It is, therefore, not the mother of Christ, but the spouse of Christ that is represented.

The *heaven* in which she appeared is the *political heaven*. And this being understood it will render the interpretation of the *sun, moon* and *stars*, easy and natural. In previous discourses the luminaries of heaven have often been explained as the symbols of civil and political powers, as chief rulers in church and state.

Her appearance in heaven, therefore, is designative of some remarkable time when the ruling powers of the church, elevated in their position to posts

of authority, would be recognized authorities before the world. When the church would be clothed with imperial dignity; and when the subaltern powers of the empire would be under her authority.

She is represented as travailing, and bringing forth a man child, who was to rule all nations. Not as bringing forth Christ, but developing the church as raised to power. When Zion travaileth, then she brings forth children. Thus we have the increase of the church, and the struggles by which it is effected, represented by the figure. Zion travailing, and bringing forth a man child, is the figure used (Isa. lxvi. 7-9,) to represent the remarkable accessions to the church in the latter days. The term "nations," which she was to rule, in the original is, literally, *the Gentiles*: and in this place, by ruling there is no intention of expressing the extension of the kingdom of Christ; but of having authority over the heathen portions of the Roman empire. And this authority over the Gentiles is not spoken of concerning Christ exclusively, but also of the faithful, "to him that overcometh will I give power over the nations (over the Gentiles) and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." Therefore, these expressions do not necessarily identify Christ.

The child was caught up to the throne of God. He was raised to the Roman throne in the person of Constantine and his followers, to power in the Roman State. And of this it may be specially said, that he was raised to the throne of God, because the throne by that act became Christian, just as Solomon's throne was designated the throne of God. There

the church actually ruled the heathens of the empire, and coerced them into obedience to the system of Christianity as with a rod of iron, as is seen in every current account.

2nd. Another *sign* appeared in heaven, viz., that of a *great red dragon*.

Who is this dragon? Some say Satan. But certainly it is not Satan in his identical, independent character; but the persecuting, Anti-Christian heathen Roman empire, inspired and influenced by Satan; in the same manner as we formerly noticed concerning the king of the bottomless pit. A dragon might be considered as a fit representative of any heathen persecutor. "Art thou not he that hast cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" Such a power is animated by him who is the inciter and ruler of all the great persecuting powers in the world—the old serpent, the Devil, and Satan.

The seven heads and ten horns, with the diadem, distinctly fix the symbol upon Rome, for these are the distinctive marks of the persecuting powers of Rome (chap. xvii. 9, 18.) The seven forms of government and the ten kingdoms, are here specially referred to. The ten crowns are not the *stephanoi*, or laurel crowns; but the *diademata*, or diadems. Near the beginning of the third century, the laurel crown was changed for the diadem; which at once identifies Rome, and marks the chronological period to which the text alludes. Near the beginning of the third century, the figure of a dragon was used as a Roman standard. The Apocalypse now here employs self-adopted symbols of a country; but

such as belong to, and are natural to it. And again, the fact of the dragon drawing the third part of the stars of heaven leads to the same chronological exactness. The period to which all this points is a little before the abolishment of Paganism, and at the crisis of the transition from the Pagan to the Christian supremacy.

The woman and the dragon were in the same heaven together, which they could not have been at any other period. And the dragon drew the third part of the stars. A.D. 313, the empire existed under *three divisions*, governed by Constantine, Licinus, and Maximin. In two of these divisions, those under Constantine and Licinus, the Christians had liberty to worship God according to their convictions : in the third, under the persecuting heathen emperor Maximin, they were not allowed the liberty of public worship. So that the dragon had the third part under his influence.

3rd. The birth of a *man child*.

The birth of Jesus Christ is not here intended, as we have before observed, but the developing of the Christian church, in their corporate capacity. The church as raised to her state of prosperity, grandeur, and dignity, about the year 313. This is the year when the famous decree of Licinus and Constantine was issued. At this time two-thirds of the Roman empire became professedly Christian, and one-third continued Pagan under Maximin, and continued to persecute the Christians. The woman was drawing near to her parturition, and was undergoing the pangs occasioned by Dioclesian's persecution. One

week before the birth of the man child, or seven years, might be occupied in these struggles for ascendancy. If we reckon from Christ's ascension 33, this event was brought about in nine figurative months afterwards, the usual time of human gestation, or 280 literal years. If we add this last number to 33, we come to the year 313, the exact date of the issuing of the above mentioned decree, and at the close of this period the man child was fully brought forth in the raising up of Constantine, a professed Christian, to full imperial power. The church was caught up to the throne of God. Gibbon says, "Constantine elevated Christianity to the throne of the Roman world."

The dragon, the old Pagan power, in the person of Maximin, the ruler of a third part of the empire, and the bitter enemy of Christianity, stood by, ready to destroy the new born child; or, to destroy Constantine, and with him Christianity itself. He made war against the Christian party, being determined to annihilate it. He vowed to Jupiter that if he obtained the victory he would exterminate the Christian name. The contest was between Jupiter and Jehovah. Licinus was directed in a dream to supplicate, with all his army, the supreme God, in a solemn manner. They did so, using the very words which he had received in his dream. Victory decided in favour of Licinus. "Then," says Gibbon, "the death of Maximin delivered the church from the last and most implacable of her enemies." Pagan worship was prohibited; and thus the Pagans were ruled with a rod of iron."

4th. *The 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.” Earthly agencies were employed, while the angelic were the principals. This was brought about by the seduction of Licinus to Paganism, and by his then entering into contest with the representative of Christianity. The antagonistic principles were Paganism and Christianity. Licinus was induced to head the dragon’s cause. When the woman had brought forth the man child, and that child was raised to eminent dignity—when the church was developed as a great national institution with Constantine at its head, it brought into activity the enmity of the Pagans. On actual contest, Licinus was defeated, and the dragon was cast out of heaven, and his place was no more found therein; for although Julian the apostate attempted it, he did not succeed, and he was speedily cut off, having reigned only about one year. Thus the dragon actually had no more place in the political heaven. Eusebius, a contemporary of this period, relates, that in a picture placed by Constantine over his palace gate, there was represented the cross, the ensign of salvation, elevated above his head, and beneath his enemy, under the semblance of a dragon, precipitated into the abyss. Thus we perceive the exactness of the imagery of the Apocalypse, which was so fully answered by the facts.

5th. *The song of victory.*

“Now hath there come the salvation,” &c. Thus



sung the conquerors this song of victory, as the word implies. When the Christians had conquered their enemies and were promoted to eminent dignity—when the church was developed as a great national institution—there was this song chanted in the political heaven. Some consider it the song of the saints in the heaven of God's glory. But this would be taking the term literally, and applying to themselves what belonged to the church on earth. Others say it was sung by angels; but this would be liable to the same objections. The heaven must be the same in which the woman and the dragon and the child were, viz., the symbolical heaven of political power and authority. It would be uttered by the living, conquering Christians, on account of their late success. Angels are not our brethren, not being partakers of flesh and blood. We may suppose there was some song similar in import actually used in the Roman Christian world on this important event. It was such a brilliant period, that the Christians thought that the full glories of the church, as predicted by the prophets, had come. Foxe, the Martyrologist, stated that he thought the Millennium commenced when Constantine established the Christian church. Eusebius, surveying the change, says, that the Christians, in hymns and songs every where, expressed their gratitude to God. "Formerly," says he, "we used to sing, we have heard what thou didst in our father's days; but now we have to sing a new song of victory: our own eyes have seen this salvation." They sang, the deliverance, the power, and the kingdom of our God is come. Constan-

tine considered that he had received his kingdom from God ; and that it was his. The brethren had had accusers, stimulated by Satan, before the heathen emperors ; but now those accusers were hurled down. They adverted in their song of praise to their faithful brethren who had laid down their lives for Christ's cause, and acknowledged that they had overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by their firmness in witnessing for Jesus. Those who were still alive also conquered : those in bondage and prison were liberated : all were conquerors : all were delivered from a heavy yoke. Eusebius speaks of the casting down of the dragon as the casting down of the accuser of the brethren.—We cannot but admire the adaptation of the words of the prophecy to those actually used.

6th. The subsequent *persecution, flight, and aid* of the woman.

“ Woe unto 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.” And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.” This ought to have begun a new paragraph. The expression of the woe does not belong to the song of praise, as though their rejoicings were mingled with anticipations of evil. It indicates some new woe in the Roman empire. The angels of the dragon, who had until lately enjoyed political influence, but now separated from it, and cast off, were additionally inclined, and watched for every opportunity to injure them : and

Satan having failed in upholding his superstition in high places, and in injuring Christians by persecution, now sought some new way of ruining them. A woe did befall the Christian Roman empire, especially the church established in it, commencing from this time. The woman was persecuted by the dragon, upon which she fled into the wilderness. But in what manner was this persecution effected? Not by open violence. Satan had tried fire, sword, wild beasts, &c., and now he tried the spread of heresy. An outwardly prosperous church rarely continues pure. After the death of Constantine, the Arian heresy became rife in the empire; by which the church was disturbed and persecuted, and then the barbarous hords of Arian Goths were a scourge to the church, and to the empire. The Arians denied the Deity and the atonement of Christ, and the Pagans looked unto them as near a kin to themselves, and were therefore, not so strongly opposed to them. It cannot be correctly apprehended, without a minute perusal of the history of those times, how baneful were these errors, and how much the church suffered through them.

The true, spiritual part of the church, soon began to retire from the heaven to which she had been elevated, and became a wanderer on earth, pious men shrunk from the society of the great and influential, where those errors were encouraged. The woman's flight into the wilderness was progressive. True Christianity—the inner and pure church, generally absented themselves from high places, and disappeared; and the outer or nominal church alone remained.

Church organization was still extant, ceremonies were performed, and a form of worship attended to, with splendid celebrations; but true Christians did not appear openly. The truly pious took refuge, some in hermitages, and in isolation from the world; and in course of time bodies of them were found in the vallies of Piedmont, and in other localities. "It was an evil Dæmon," says Eusebius, "that wrought the mischief, envious of the happiness and prosperity of the church."

3. The *instrumental aid* the church received in her flight.

"And to the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness." The words, literally rendered, are—"of the eagle, the great one"—alluding to some peculiar one. St. John probably took a retrospective glance at the protection afforded by God to his ancient Israel, when fleeing into the wilderness from the persecutions of Pharaoh. "You have seen what I did to Pharaoh; and how I bore you on eagle's wings, and brought you to myself." It is emblematical of some particular earthly instrumentality, appropriate to the emblem. The two wings are fitly explained of the two divisions of the Roman empire; the three divisions having been merged into two by Constantine. It represents aid given in escaping, and characterizes some Roman Prince pre-eminently great, affording that assistance. Theodosius the Great, had united the two divisions of the empire under his own sway; and he was a Christian, not only in name, but in reality. He used all his imperial

power to restore, protect and foster, the orthodox church of Christ. He put restraint upon Paganism and Arianism, the agencies of the dragon, in persecuting the real church, and encouraged the Trinitarians. Here, therefore, we see the two wings of the great eagle given to the woman. Theodosius reigned in prosperity eighteen years, and greatly strengthened the state and the church. Had not he protected the church these eighteen years, the Gothic flood would have swept her away. But through this respite the Christians had time and opportunity to gather strength, and were prepared to retreat to a safe position, holding the true faith of the Gospel.

4. The *floods cast out of the dragon's mouth* to overwhelm the woman.

While the church was receding into the wilderness, the dragon cast out of his mouth a flood of waters after her, that he might cause her to be carried away by them. This image is borrowed from the practice of crocodiles and whales taking in large portions of water and spouting it out. There is a double idea suggested.

1. That floods from the mouth is doctrine, good or bad.

2. Floods are a constant scripture metaphor for the invasion of hostile nations. This flood was identical with the one out of which the wild beast arose; and the woman riding on the beast was said to rest on the flood, as signifying peoples, tongues, and nations. That is, these corruptions of the purity of the church, together with the barbarian influence,

were the origin of Anti-Christ, and facilitated the Roman apostacy. The old serpent is the instrument, for he is the author of error; and he instigates wicked men to make desolations in the earth. We find, occurring at this very time, the eruption into Italy of the Visigoths, the Vandals, and the Huns. All these tribes were Arians, so that the two ideas are blended together, and united in one. By both these methods Satan sought to sweep away the Christian church, and they were acted out by one and the same people. Satan had failed of crushing the Christian church by means of the heathen emperors, and now he raises up these barbarous nations to effect it. The facts of these eruptions have already been alluded to in former discourses; and we need only say that they were one great cause of the destruction of the empire itself. Barbarians were also treacherously invited into Italy and Africa, with the intention of re-establishing Paganism; and the hopes of the remnant of the Pagans were considerably raised by the measure.

5. The *aïd* contributed to the support of the woman by the earth, or secular power.

The protection which Theodosius gave to the orthodox faith, caused it so far to take root among the people, that the barbarian Arians themselves soon saw it necessary to protect it. To destroy the true faith was to destroy nearly all the Roman people; and they saw the attempt was too hazardous. They, therefore, abandoned the thought, and protected the true faith; and in course of time, they professed it, and became incorporated with the

Roman people in language, manners, and worship. Thus the earth helped the woman.

True religion was to dwell in this wilderness state 1260 years, until the marriage of the Lamb. Real piety will never be patronized by the world, but it will itself ever shrink from the association of the proud, rich professor of a nominal Christianity, and seek a retired retreat for spiritual communion and worship. But at the period we have just alluded to the woman will come forth out of the wilderness, as the spouse of Christ, leaning on her Beloved. The church emerging from that state of obloquy and oppression, will shine with her derived lustre and will be a happy community of distinguished saints.

These are the features in the portraiture of the state of the church at this time. The period of the continuance of this state, you will recollect, is contemporaneous with that of the two witnesses.

That symbol represents other aspects of the church in this period, and are to be viewed in combination with the features here represented. The witnesses represent the continuous protest against error, and the symbol at present before us represents the church in its retreat, and dissociation from the world, and while refusing to partake of the popular smile, she was continually maintaining and propagating the truth. Spurious Christianity makes the greatest show; while true Christianity is often hidden in some obscure place, or concealed under unfavorable circumstances. Two's and three's are found meeting together in times of opposition, in secret places.

True communion with God cannot bear the gaze of the world, and will not offer itself for the adulation of the multitude. The true sons of God are not yet manifest: all creation, or all God's rational creatures, are "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. The world knoweth us not," for "our life is hid with Christ in God;" and nothing as yet is more evident than that believers are God's "hidden ones."

Impressed with the above views, we are certainly led to ask, are we dissociated from the ways, maxims and manners of the world; and do we seek secret intercourse with God? Under the fig-tree, retreat from human observation, do the eyes of Jesus behold us?

The church recognized by the state may yet not be the true church. If that were invariably the case, then we should see various and anomalous specimens: and the corrupt, Arian, worldly-minded church of this period would be God's church, while those retiring into the wilderness to worship God by stealth, in conventicles, would be spurious. It is possible to be recognized by the opulent, and yet be renounced by Jesus; or to be in the wilderness, unnoticed by the rulers of the world, and yet have Christ's smile of recognition.

We were brought down to the reformation in chap. x. noticed in discourse the seventh. We had then an episode of the two witnesses in chap. xi., which also brought us down to the reformation: and our present subject of the church in the wilderness is another retrospection which brings us down to the same period. Chap. xiii., exhibits the rise of the



beast out of the sea. For a moment we shall pass by this description, and proceed to briefly introduce chap. xiv., from the first to the fifth verse. This is a song for the wonderful interposition of God, as instanced in the reformation. In the text it is introduced after the account of the rise and fall of the Anti-Christian power, and just before the notice of the judgments which follow the destruction of that power. It justly belongs to this period, and may be noticed here as well as in connection with that awful catastrophe.

This song was written outside the roll, as was the present episode. It was sang by the 144,000, mentioned in the sealing vision, as with the voice of harpers, who are intimately connected with the transactions and characteristics we have been detailing, being the faithful people of God among the mass of apostates. They are the undefiled, following the Lamb universally, and redeemed among men; the first fruits, or the pre-eminent among professed Christians. They are the sincere, and those truly devoted to God, without fault in their conduct, for they heartily did the will of God. Their thanksgiving was earnest; it is represented as the *voice of many waters*. It was a *new song*, one never before sung, for this was such an event as had never before transpired in the church: and none could learn it but the 144,000, none but those who had been washed in the blood of the Lamb, and who had seen and endured the peculiar tribulations they had experienced at this period of the church's existence. It was sung before the throne whereon sat the eter-

nal, triune God ; before the four beasts, the cherubic representatives of redemption ; and before the elders, the representatives of the redeemed in all ages. Oh ! what a song is redemption, especially on such an occasion ! How often do we sing of redemption with cold hearts, and without emotion. This subject ought to “ dance our glad hearts for joy.” The church militant should emulate the rapturous choirs of the church triumphant.

We are redeemed by Christ ; and we participate in the blessings of the reformation : we have God’s open book and valuable means of grace with which none can interfere. But have we tasted of redemption, and that the Lord is gracious ? If so, then we shall be disposed to praise him in a new song which he has put into our mouth ; to retire from the practices and smiles of a wicked world ; and to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. May he, of his Divine mercy, lead us to his unvailed glory above. Amen.



## DISCOURSE X.

### ANTI-CHRIST IDENTIFIED AND DOOMED.

Rev. xiii.—xvii.—“ 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. 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. 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 a man ; and his number is six hundred three score and six. \* \* \* \* And there came one of the seven angels which 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 colored 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 woman sitteth. And there are seven kings : five 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, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. And the ten horns which 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 shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the 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 he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten 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 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 that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”

THE various fortunes and phases of the church have been shown in the preceding visions : and now we

come to another remarkable condition through which she had to pass. St. John now proceeds to show the rise of a power antagonistic to Christianity. And he is not alone in this representation, for several other sacred writers have also had revelations to the same intent, and have made the same disclosures. This is just as we should have imagined would have been the case. If God does indeed design to give us some foreshadowing of things to come, we should expect to see this awful apostacy pervading the the minds of the inspired instruments used in the prediction of the facts. These revelations are henceforth to be much occupied with this subject. We shall endeavour to exhibit from them,

#### I. ANTI-CHRIST IDENTIFIED.

Now, if these revelations are from God we shall certainly find a power rising up somewhere about the time referred to in the predictions, answering to and identical with these descriptions.

In chap. xiii., the apostle describes a *wild beast* which he saw rise up from the *sea*; and at chap. xvii. another from the *abyss*. One and the same power is intended by these two figurations. The former description having been given at the *commencement* of its history, and the latter at its *termination*; being introduced at the latter period to show the judgments to be inflicted upon it, and the description being somewhat varied in accordance with its later manifestation: while the former prediction describes him as he appeared in the earlier stages of his existence. It is probable that the first description exhibits him under his seventh head as the successor of the dra-

gon; and the latter under his eighth head, in his more complete Papistic form.—There is also a remarkable identity between the last ruling head of the beast from the seas and the abyss, with Daniel's little horn of the fourth beast, (Dan. vii.,) St. Paul's man of sin, and St. John's Anti-Christ.

In the leading and essential features of corporiety contained in chap. xiii. and xvii., there is identity, viz., there are seven heads and ten horns in each. If these symbolize seven forms of government, and ten kings arising out of the last, according to general supposition, it takes up the whole ground, and that ground is common to both.

Over and above this fundamental similarity, there are many other points of semblance equally striking. They were each inscribed with names of blasphemy—were each objects of wonder, deference and submission—each entering into contest with Christ and his people, and each wielding an amazing ecclesiastical power. There are points of coincidence also between them and the fourth beast in Daniel (chap. xvii. 10,) in its last or horned state. Daniel saw four beasts, which are four kingdoms. The fourth beast was diverse from all others. It had ten horns, three of which were plucked up by a little horn, which arose up among the ten. This little horn had eyes like a man—was a *Scer*, an *Overseer*, or *Bishop*—it had a mouth speaking great things—and was to make war with the saints, until the saints took the kingdom.

The fourth beast was the fourth kingdom—the ten horns are ten kings, and the little horn is a king diverse

from the rest, who shall subdue three kings, and shall speak great words against the Most High. Here is the Roman empire as the fourth beast—its ten kingdoms, into which it was divided—and the diverse usurping ecclesiastical power taking possession of three principalities, and establishing a temporal dominion—he speaks great or blasphemous things against the Most High.

St. Paul also spoke of the rise of an Anti-Christian power, of which he gives certain clear descriptions as indications of his real character. He shows that there was to arise a certain person, or succession of persons, or powers, whom he denominates the *Man of Sin*, the lawless one, and son of perdition. The Man of Sin is the offspring of sin—the lawless one is above all laws, changing the laws of Christ, and enacting new ones—the son of perdition is the antitype of Judas, as a traitor, apostle, or bishop, and as doomed to perdition. Do not be deceived says he, to the Thessalonians, (2. Epis. ii. 7, 10,) concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. There must first be a falling away—an apostasy—and the man of sin revealed or fully developed; as yet there is a hindrance to that full development which must be removed; and until some change take place it is impossible that he should be manifested. The Thessalonians knew that this was imperial Rome. But, he added, when it should be removed, then shall the man of sin be revealed; and finally he shall be destroyed: and all this before the end shall come. Thus, in removing an error into which they had



fallen, he draws this graphic picture concerning this Anti-Christian power which should arise.

Three things were to be signs and accompaniments of the revelation of the man of sin, viz., lying wonders and miracles. 2. A deceivableness of unrighteousness. And, 3. An energy of power and success. It was to be uncommonly replete with impiety, pride, self-exaltation above all that is called God, so as to sit in God's temple or church.

In 1. Tim. iv. 1, &c., the same Apostle asserts that there was to be a departure from the faith: and gives several features of its character, which are plainly indicative of the same Anti-Christian power. He tells Timothy that if he put the brethren in remembrance of these things, he would be a good minister of Jesus Christ. Anti-Christ, then, was to take his rise at the removal of the hindrance. That hindrance was the Roman power, which would not permit the assumption of any temporal power; or of those high spiritual usurpations within its jurisdiction. When that was removed by the dismemberment of the Roman Empire, Anti-Christ was to rise. Anti-Christ and the ten kingdoms arose together; or, Anti-Christ arose before they were all completely established. Thus this power arose out of that flood of barbaric eruption cast out of the mouth of the dragon. They received authority for one hour. (*i.e.*, at one and the same time, as the words have been shown by Mr. Elliott to signify.) All these things are in exact agreement with the representations made in the revelations.

St. John speaks of an Anti-Christ, (2. Epis. 7 ver.)

of which he reminds the saints they had heard that it cometh—the term means a Vice Christ, or a false antagonistic Christ; one substituting himself in Christ's place. The Papistry is here plainly identified as Anti-Christ.

The corruptions of Christianity have been treated of in preceding discourses, showing a gradual development of Anti-Christian apostacy. What we have now to do is to show that the symbols which characterise this power are answered by Popery. There are ample descriptions in chaps. xiii. and xvii. which will clearly demonstrate this position.

The 13th chapter contains the basis of the description, but in treating the subject we shall have to refer to the 17th chapter, to Daniel, and to St. Paul.

1st. The *origin* of the beast was the *sea*.

He arose out of, or from among the people; but he had an earlier, or prior origin from the abyss, or pit of hell; for the Devil is the father of the system. We see from the context that by the sea is meant the floods of invading Goths, just before mentioned, and which we have before noticed. It was here that the Popish power had its establishment.

2nd. *Discriminating characteristics* of the beast.

Anti-Christ is exhibited under *three* emblems—the beast proper—the two-horned beast—and the image of the beast. The seven headed beast is the principal. The two-horned beast is represented acting as his chief minister, endeavoring to bring the world to worship him. The false prophet, who arose from the abyss with the second beast, is iden-

tical with the two-horned beast. The first beast answers to Daniel's little horn ; the Pope answers to the head ; the Papal territory to the body.

1. The *heads* of the wild beast.

There is a double meaning given to the heads. They signify,—1. The seven hills of Rome. On these the woman, carried by the beast, was seated. She is designated the city which ruled the world. This city was, and is the capital of Popedom—the Episcopal See of Rome. When the Episcopal seat was sought to be changed to Avignon, it was found impracticable effectually to accomplish it.

The seven heads denote,—2. Successive forms of government. On the best authorities, and that of even imperial Roman writers themselves, these are the governments of *Kings, Consuls, Dictators, Decemvirs, Military Tribunes, and Emperors*. The *Triumvirate* was not a head, or recognized form of government ; but only a private arrangement. The above *six* are evident. Five had fallen when St. John was in Patmos, the *sixth* was then in power. The remaining *seventh* was at that time future, and to continue but a short space, until it was to be changed to the *eighth*. But what constituted the *seventh*? There has been some difficulty among expositors to clearly ascertain the point ; and also some difference in the mode of explanation. It is not the Demi-Cæsars, as Mr. Mede conjectures. Not the Christian government, for this would be making the Christian empire a part of the beast. We find according to the angel's explanation that the last head was both the *seventh* and the *eighth*. If

there was some change in the government after St. John's time, we should in that change have the *seventh*, which would be also the *eighth*—seven Pagan and one Anti-Christian. The sixth, or imperial, did not really remain unchanged until Constantine's time. Dioclesian assumed the diadem. Accordingly we see diadems on the seven heads. The diadem was not used in St. John's time, but was placed there by Dioclesian. Accordingly Gibbon states, in his index, "Dioclesian assumes the diadem, and introduces the Persian ceremonial—new form of administration." And he says, "like Augustus, Dioclesian may be considered as the founder of a new empire." And then Gibbon goes on to show how essentially the government of the empire was affected by the change. This marks the precision of the prophecy, which in all cases is admirable.

The seven heads belong to the entire existence of the beast; the eighth, or new seven, belongs to the ten horned beast from the abyss.

The seventh head was *wounded to death*; and afterwards an eighth head appeared in its place. The last Pagan head was wounded and crushed by the sword of the Christian conqueror, who changed even the seat of government from Rome to Constantinople. Yet lingering life remained. Still the Pagans indulged in hopes for some favorable circumstance to bring about a change, until these hopes were slain by Theodosius. The *deadly wound was healed* in again making Rome the seat of government by the Pope.

The seventh head was also the eighth (ver. 11.)

The eighth head sprang up in the place of the seventh, wounded to death—a new seventh, in the place of the old seventh, so that *it was the eighth, though one of the seven*. Here is exact discrimination. It is said that the dragon yielded his power or authority to the beast on his rising from the sea. *Papal* Rome succeeds to *Pagan* Rome as an antagonist to Christ, and Satan uses the former, in the place of the latter. According to St. Paul the seventh head was the hindrance of the development of the man of sin. And the seventh head must be wounded to death before the eighth could exist. Pagan hopes long lingered, expecting some occurrence might arise through which their power would be restored. Although wounded by Constantine, yet life faintly lingered, and when it could no longer survive, the power was transferred to the *Papal* or eighth head; and, therefore, the eighth head was of the seven; although annihilated in its circumstantial form, yet essentially it survived as the same—it was still the same Roman power. We hope, by the preceding statement, it will be clearly seen that *Satan substituted Popery for Paganism*, as the best means of injuring Christianity, and that the dragon's power was in the manner we have described transferred to the beast. Paganism had lost its power, and the Devil choose to work in another form; giving to corrupt Christianity his Satanic influence, instead of continuing to work through the medium of a dead carcass—the slain Pagan power. And indeed this monstrous apostacy is *Satan's master piece*.

This will explain what is recorded in the 17th chapter. The beast "*was, and is not, and yet is.*" It having been deadly wounded and annihilated in the preceding *Draconic* form. It continues to exist throughout the whole course *essentially* the same, although it does not exist throughout the whole of this course *circumstantially* the same.—In the pontificate Rome revived, as with a second birth, Gibbon dilates long and warmly on the revival of Rome by the Papal power. Blondus, a pontifical writer, says, "the princes of the world now adore and worship, as Perpetual Dictator, the successor, not of Cæsar, but of the fisherman Peter : that is, the supreme pontiff, the substitute of the aforesaid Emperor." It was the expectation of the ancient Father, Hippolytus, that Anti-Christ would revive Rome and its empire in some new form, even as Augustus remodelled and fresh founded it, and this by means of some new law, or constitution, which, while revivifying Rome, was to bring glory to himself.

## 2. The *ten horns* of the beast.

These, according to the angel's interpretation, are *ten kings*, or kingdoms.—1. But *when were they to arise?* It is clear they were to arise at a time *subsequent*, but *not long* subsequent to the breaking up of the Roman Empire by the Gothic flood ; and as soon as time and circumstances allowed for the formation of the number *ten* ; and *antecedent* to the eradication of three of the number, as predicted by Daniel. They were to arise *simultaneously* with the beast, for they were to receive power with him one

hour, or at one and the same time, as the accurate translation of the words is given by critics.

2. *In what extent of territory are these kingdoms to be sought?*

There has been difficulty in fixing upon these ten kingdoms. We would say, in general, we must search for their locality in the territory of that empire which was dismembered, and previously symbolized by the dragon. It has been usual for them to be searched for *only in the western territory*, as it was divided by Dioclesian. There is usually included England, France, Spain, the African Province, Italy, and the countries between the Alps, and the Rhine, Danube, and Save, anciently known under the names of Rhætia, Noricum, and Pannonia; and in modern times as Switzerland, half Swabia, Bavaria, Austria, and the Western parts of Hungary. But yet, I think the lists generally given, were unsatisfactory, and many objections might be taken to them. Also a question naturally arises, are we to look for these kingdoms solely in the western territory of the empire? Or, in the whole empire; some in the eastern, and some in the western divisions? In the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, the thighs and legs of the image represented the Roman empire; and the ten toes another division, or form of its existence. If this represented the two divisions of the empire, then the subsequent division of ten, which represents the same territory, can hardly be considered as belonging to one part, but to both. It is true, the Eastern Empire was not at that time dismembered, but still the territory, a part of the

image of the beast, was there; and it must furnish material, in some shape or other, at one time or another, if required. I should say, then, that any where, within the whole boundaries of the Roman Empire, ten kingdoms were originally to be formed; and we are to look for the ten under any changes or alterations any where within this boundary, where ten can at any time be found. I say this, because these kingdoms are not always the same. Some became Protestant. But yet as there are to be ten at the time of the desolation of Rome, it may possibly occur that we may have to look to some other part of the body of the beast to discover them, as well as to the western division.

It is not material to fix minutely upon these kingdoms; undoubtedly there *were ten* in Roman territory. And notwithstanding subsequent modifications, there *have generally been ten* principal kingdoms in this territory, and we learn there *will be ten* at the time of the last struggle, notwithstanding the change made by the separation of England, of the Netherlands, and of other places: for the *ten* kings will hate the whore, &c.

Perhaps the whole of the Papacy, or any part of the world ecclesiastically under Papal government, at the time, and forming *then* the *body of the beast*, is to be considered, whether geographically within the territory of the Roman Empire, or elsewhere: thus any part which escapes the superstition of the Papacy may be excluded: and surely if they come out of the city they will not partake of its plagues; and any part then belonging to it may, for like rea-



sons, be included. And for reasons above stated the Greek church may be included, for although not governed by the Pope, yet they are swayed by similar errors.

*Three of these kingdoms* were rooted up by the Pope, and were granted to him as a *temporal dominion*, under the patronymic of "the patrimony of Peter." Other principalities attached to the Pope, having had their positions and associations altered, were added to make the number ten.

3. The *assumptions* and *acts* of the beast.

There was given unto him a mouth, speaking great things and blasphemies. He claimed to be Christ's appointed Vicar on earth. This word carries the same meaning as Anti-Christ.

His pride and blasphemies are noticed. They are alike the notification of Daniel, of St. Paul, and of the Apocalypse. As Christ's Vicar, he affirmed, he might judge all, but could be judged of none—might make laws, but was above all law—the lawless one of St. Paul. He claims to be above all earthly kings, and royal majesty—head over all in Christ's place on earth. All princes must kiss his feet. The power of the keys is given to him, so that he can open or shut heaven at his pleasure. He asserted that the promises made to Christ of the wide extent of his future power and reign, consisted in all kings bowing down to him, and all nations doing him service. He assumed every title of Christ—the good shepherd—the door—the truth, or the infallible—holiness—husband of the church—Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world. He assumes

that he has power to command angels, and to add to heaven's hierarchy. Men were commanded to bow at the mention of the Pope's name, as they are commanded to bow to that of Christ. And sitting on the high altar at St. Peter's, at his consecration, to be adored. Well might it be said that upon the heads of the beast were the names of blasphemies; and that the scarlet colored beast was full of the names of blasphemy: and that the mouth of the little horn spake blasphemy. Just and true was that inscription upon the forehead of the woman, "mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth."

And to appear in character with her claims, the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls.

Is it possible that those sonorous pretensions and high claims could be admitted, and submitted to? This was actually the fact. The ten kings had "one mind, and gave their power and strength unto the beast." "And all the world wondered after and worshipped the beast, saying, who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" All that dwell on the face of the earth (except those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of Life) shall worship him. Painful fact has realized this to all its extent. And the reason of all this monstrous homage is, that they were *intoxicated* by drinking of that golden cup full of the inebriating draught of abomination and filthiness of fornication; as well as being *dazzled* by her gorgeous array. The plain, literal meaning of all this is, that

the votaries of this pernicious error, are filled with an awful *infatuation*.

4. *The aggressive onsets of the beast.*

It was given him to make war with the saints, and to overcome: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations—the woman was drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.—The ten kings shall make war with the Lamb.

1. The beast opened his mouth to blaspheme, or speak injurious things of the saints. He termed them heretics—accursed—children of the devil—the spawn of hell, &c.

2. He engaged in actual warfare against them. Witness the private and limited persecutions—the fires of Smithfield—the Spanish Armada—the massacres of St. Bartholomew's day—the crusades against the Albigenses—the Inquisition. Oh! what tales of horror might be rehearsed; and in fact, books have been filled with their recital.

The great author of all this work is declared to have been the dragon, or the devil, who gave to the beast his own seat and power, and great authority. And with great fidelity has he occupied that seat, and wielded that authority and power. Nay, it would appear that he has far exceeded the devil's former deputy, the Pagan power.

5. *The two-horned lamb-like beast.*

This beast appears to be subordinate to the first, and to sustain only a delegated power. He was to exercise this power *before him*—as overseen by, and responsible to him; and to exercise it to subserve his

purposes. To effect his objects he caused fire to come from heaven, and performed mighty miracles, which he had power to do in the sight of the beast.

The clergy of the church of Rome appear to be intended by this second beast. False teachers are wolves in sheep's clothing. This beast is lamb-like in appearance, yet ferocious as the fiercest beast of prey in reality. The two horns denote the secular, and the regular clergy. The clergy are entirely and absolutely under the authority of the bishops and the Pope. The bishops are styled bishops by the grace of the Pope, not by the grace of God. And they were constantly before the Pope, under the inspection of those keen eyes, like the eyes of a man. Hence he spake like a dragon, he was armed with such authority that he spake peremptorily, and with stern authority.

He exercised all the power and authority of the first beast before him—the power of the keys, absolution, deliverance from purgatory. He had power to do great miracles, or signs. False or pretended miracles have been very common in the apostate church. They pretended to have power to make a Christ—a God-man every day. And this may be the intent of making fire to come from heaven. The Jewish priest sometimes brought fire upon the sacrifice, to consume the offering. The Roman priests present and offer the sacrifice complete, as already offered. The priests also claim the power of hurling the judicial fire of heaven upon all offenders.

The church of Rome makes great boast of mira-

cles, even at the present day ; and greatly depend upon them as proofs that they are the true church : but by making that pretence they prove themselves to be the false, or apostate church, for they thus answer to this prediction of the lamb-like beast.

They caused the inhabitants of the earth to worship the first beast. They use every effort to uphold his power and authority. The false prophet, who accompanied the beast from the abyss, (chap. 17,) answers to the second beast of chap. 13.

6th. *The image of the beast.*

An image of the beast was made by the people on the advice of the second beast. This is literally an image, or representation of Papal Christendom. And what is there that does in reality represent this power and policy,—Pope, Bishops, Abbots, Clergy, Laity? Mr. Elliott, and several other interpreters, say, *the Papal Councils*. They are ecclesiastical representations of Christendom. Tertullian, called a council, “the very representation of the whole constituent body.” The exact representation of the English nation was said by one of its members to be the real and express image and representation of the country. A general council speaks the mind of the Papal church, especially of the clergy ; for whatever the Pope wished, that they voted, and so they made the image speak the mind of the Pope ; giving commands, and uttering threatenings against those who disobey. Persecution, even unto death, was carried on through the decrees and canons of a council : thus he caused all that would not worship the beast should be killed. It was the

main business of the councils to extirpate heresy. There is scarcely a spot on earth, trodden by the foot of a civilized man, that has not been moistened by the blood of martyrs.

7th. The *mark, name, and number* of the beast.

All were to receive a mark on the right hand, and on the forehead. This was to furnish a sure and convincing proof that they belonged to Anti-Christ, and all were required to submit to it.

The prevalent customs in the Roman world about this time will illustrate these particulars. Three classes of persons were marked—slaves, soldiers, and the devotees of gods; and the impression was generally on the forehead, or right hand. The mark consisted sometimes of the name of the owner, monarch, or god, or a characteristic emblem of the claimants. When it was a god it was generally his characteristic number that was impressed.

The name often expressed his number by the numeral value of the letters; and hence here the expression, “the number of his name.” In enumerations we use figures; but the ancients used letters. Several letters of the alphabet had a fixed numerical value. This is the case with the Hebrew, Arabic, Grecian, and to a certain extent with the Latin languages. The calculation was made according to the Greek value of the constituent letters of the name. Sometimes the Hebrew was used. Thus the Egyptians mentioned Mercury, or Thouth, under the number 1218, because the numerical value of the Greek letters composing this name Thouth, amount-

ed to that number. Many other instances might be cited.

Now, as to the beast's name and number. "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast : for it is the number of a man ; and his number is six hundred three score and six." (666.)

Now we ask, on the principles before laid down, what name can be produced from this number? The language is Greek, and not Hebrew, for the Apocalypse was written in Greek ; and Hebrew was not understood by many of those who would read it. Our Lord Jesus Christ selected the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet to express his eternity, "I am Alpha and Omega," &c. And hence we are to endeavour to find letters to form a name which together amount to the number expressed.

Numerous associations of letters expressive of this number have been tried, so as to form a name for the character drawn in the figures of the vision, but all, except one, appear incomplete and inexpressive. The name which exactly answers in numerical value to the number, is that given by Irenæus, the disciple of St. John himself, viz., *Lateinos*, or the Latin man. And Irenæus remarks that this is very probable, for the name of the last of Daniel's kingdoms, is the Latin kingdom. Mr. Pyle, as quoted by bishop Newton, says, "no other word in any language can be found to express both the same number, and the same thing."

An objection is taken as to the orthography of this name, as being in modern times written *Latinos*,

which makes only 661, and not *Lateinos*, 666. Some of the best scholars, however, have asserted that the ancient spelling of the name was with the diphthong. The name *Lateinos* (Latin man) is exceedingly expressive of the beast, or Popery. The language is Latin; these kingdoms are Latin kingdoms; it is the Latin church; the Latin Patriarch; the Latin Clergy; the Latin councils. Dr. Moore remarks, "they Latinize every thing—Mass—prayers, litanies, canons, decretals, bulls—all are couched in Latin—in short all things are Latin." Let any one take a Greek grammar, and notice the numeral value of the Greek letters in the name we have mentioned, and he will perceive that in this name we have exactly the number 666, viz.:

|        |     |
|--------|-----|
| L..... | 30  |
| a..... | 1   |
| t..... | 300 |
| e..... | 5   |
| i..... | 10  |
| n..... | 50  |
| o..... | 70  |
| s..... | 200 |

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Lateinos                  666.

Here then we have the number of the name: here we are directed to the identity of the Latin, Papal, Roman Church, and this is an identification, great and decisive in itself; and which serves to corroborate all the previous ones.

By the Papal clergy imprinting this number and name on the people, we understand their causing



the people of the Roman earth to become *distinctly Papal*, and to devote themselves to the Papal Anti-Christ, in like manner as soldiers do to their king, as slaves to their master, or as devotees to their god. A mere doubt on the subject would place them under the power of the inquisition. The salvation of their souls, according to their representations, depended upon this adhesion; and it was essentially requisite for the enjoyment of any privilege. The people by various injunctions, and by the canons of various councils, were interdicted *buying* or *selling* with heretics.

In these various particulars Anti-Christ is clearly *identified*; and Popery is shown, in the most indubitable manner, to be that beast St. John and Daniel saw—that man of sin St. Paul described—and that Anti-Christ St. John elsewhere notified. So clear are the proofs, and so expressive the marks, that the most learned men among the Papists have been put to their utmost shifts to endeavour to turn aside the point and edge of the weapon; and they have made several pitiful and incongruous interpretations of these passages. All their interpretations only tend to confirm the candid mind in the conclusiveness of that of the Protestants. Yes! the Divine pencil has drawn the portrait, and he that runneth may trace the features and ascertain the likeness.

But is it the case that such a notorious enemy to Christ and true religion is to continue to triumph, and to tyrannize over the world. No! as surely as he is manifested to the world, so surely will he meet with his *doom*. He ascended out of the *bottomless*

*pit*, and he is to *go into perdition*. Each of these prophetic notices of his rise assures us of this fact. And the Holy Spirit has been pleased to give us a notice of the *period beyond which he cannot survive*—a period when he will receive a deadly wound *from which he cannot recover*.

' Let us in the next place more distinctly notice,  
II. THE DOOM OF ANTI-CHRIST.

I shall not, in this place, go minutely into the details of the destruction of Anti-Christ. It will come under consideration when we come to the explanation of those vials of destruction which are to be poured out upon her. Here we shall briefly notice a few terms contained in the present symbols, relative to this part of the subject.

1st. The *means* of his destruction.

In general terms it is noticed as a *war* and a *failure*. Hereafter we may have more to say of this war. St. Paul, (2 Thes. ii. 8.) informs us that the Lord will consume him with the spirit of his mouth, and will destroy him with the brightness of his coming. This is not a description of an ordinary warfare, for in an ordinary contest the sword would be in the warrior's hand. It is something either antecedent, subsequent, or auxiliary, to that final contest so often alluded to in Scripture. A sword going out of *his mouth*, is surely descriptive of that word which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword. The written and preached word will consume and dissipate his errors, and convert the erring. This will prepare the way for opposition to him, and for his destruction, and that word

will also pronounce his sentence. Finally Christ will come by his judgments, and totally uproot him. Thus the little stone shall strike that image, and break it in pieces.

These *judgments* will probably be *some actual contest* between God's servants, and the followers of Anti-Christ, or between some political antagonist, on some questions having a bearing on the interests of this power.

Her downfall will, it appears, be *accelerated by the hatred of her former supporters, the ten kings*. God has put it into their hearts to agree to give support unto this wicked system, until the words of God be fulfilled. Probably after some defeats their eyes will be opened to see the true character of the apostate; and these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate, and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. Several of these kings are even now becoming more enlightened concerning the enormous errors of this fallen church, and the late publication of the dogma of the *immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary*, will very likely create the hatred of many of these powers. It is even now doing it in some of these Popish States. There is a gradual progress towards this consummation. Papists on all hands are losing confidence in their priests, and are hating and cursing them.

2nd. The *predicted period of the beast's supremacy*.

This is said to be 42 months, or 1260 days. Taking the year-day system of interpretation this is 1260 years. This system has been adopted by the most eminent interpreters. It would evidently be absurd

to interpret some prophetic numbers on the literal day system; as, for instance, Daniel's 70 weeks. When it is confessed, on all hands, that the Apocalypse is symbolic, why deviate from this rule in any instance, except there should be a special reason from the context? This period of time occurs in several places under the denominations of 1260 days, 42 months, and a time, times, and half a time, which are all the same period.

Taking this principle as the true one, could we but know the date of the commencement of this power, we should have no difficulty in fixing its close. But here, we are bound to say, this we cannot do. Yet there may be some light into *epochs*. In several chronological scripture prophecies there are *double commencements and terminations*, as in the 70 years Babylonian captivity; and we believe it is precisely so in this case, that there are several commencements and conclusions. Some of these we may certainly know, although we may not be able to ascertain the main and essential one, which would rule the total and decisive fall of the system.

The time when the Beast became properly such, was at the rise of the ten kingdoms. The cause of the Papal supremacy was the removal of the civil government from Rome to Ravenna. It was the Roman government, according to St. Paul, which hindered the Revelation of Anti-Christ, and it was removed by that event. And it is here said, according to its exact rendering, the ten horns are ten kings, which receive their power or authority as kings *at one and the same time with the beast*: and,

therefore, the Papal beast received his characteristic authority at the same time as the ten kings. It was about 530 the ten kings began to rise, and in 606 or 607 that the last of these kingdoms was organized, and the beast began to show himself in his true character at that time. In 1790, at the French revolution, 1260 from the first above mentioned dates he began to fall. After 530 he increased in spiritual and temporal power, and so since 1790 he has been losing his homage and power. At first the ten kings were Pagan, or at best but Arian. It was their assumption of the orthodox faith that fixed the epochs. "These have one mind, and will give their power and authority to the beast." This will bring us down several years later than 1790, during which several remarkable things happened to the Pope.

The first horn was plucked up by the little horn about 533, which brings us to 1793, when the Pope was stripped of his dominions by Napoleon I. The promulgation of Justinian's code gave the headship to Rome, and may be taken as an epoch, and the *primary* commencement of the 1260 years; this was commenced in 529 and repeated in 533, the time of the plucking up of the first horn. In 588 Gregory claimed the title of universal bishop, and in the same year also he claimed the power of the keys for the successor of St. Peter. Just 1260 years after, viz., in 1848, Pius IX. fled from Rome in disguise.

Phocas' decree may be considered a *second* commencing period, was from 604 to 608. At the latter of these dates also the *last barbaric kingdom* was

*erected*; and at the same date the Pantheon, a heathen temple, was given to the Pope, which he dedicated to the Virgin Mary, &c. And as he was temporarily stripped of his dominions in 1793, so most probably in 1864, or at some time before 1868, some remarkable event will happen to him—perhaps some time about then he will be entirely deposed; and his idolatrous system, destroyed, perhaps in 1868.

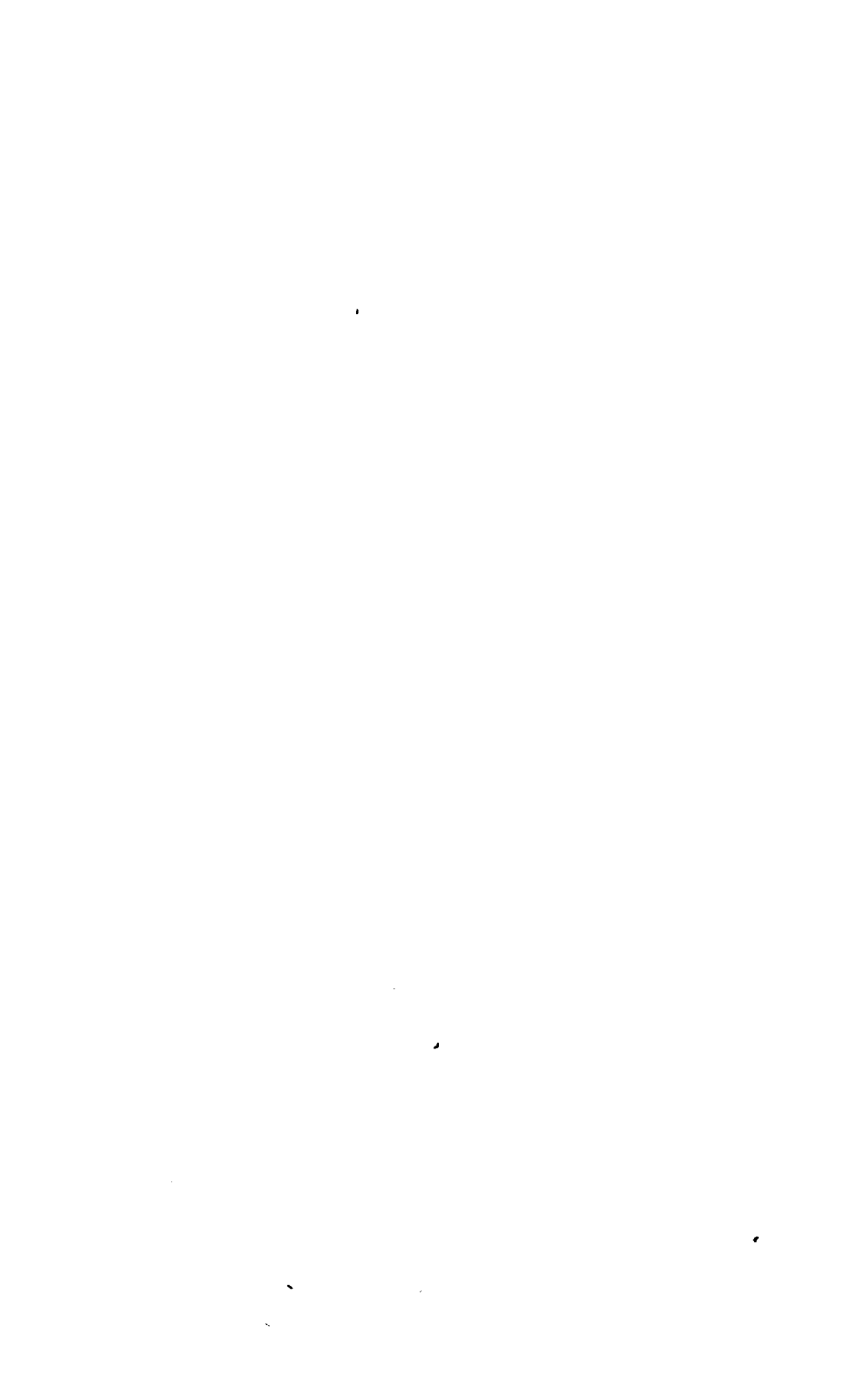
These are striking coincidences, and contain strong probabilities. There may be other events to consummate his entire desolation, and the destruction of every vestige of his power, and finally his being cast into the bottomless pit. But in all probability they will follow close on the last named.

The *completeness* of this overthrow is shown in chap. xviii. 2, 21. Its *suddenness* is expressed in chap. xviii. 8., in one day; in ver. 17, in one hour. With *violence*, ver. 21. The consternation of her adherents—their lamentations—and the rejoicings of God's people, are noticed in chaps. xviii. 20, xix. 1, &c.

Christ and Anti-Christ will enter into contest; yea, the contest, as we have seen, and shall see more hereafter, is already begun. The decisive exhibition of this conflict is coming apace. It approaches nearer and nearer every day.

Come out of her, dissociate yourselves from all kinds of connection, or communion with her, ye people of God, lest ye be partakers of her plagues.

In the mean time let every one of God's true servants use their utmost energy to spread bible and gospel truths throughout the world.



## DISCOURSE XI.

### THE FIRST FIVE VIALS—INDICATING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

REV. xi. 15-19: xv: xvi. 1-12.—“And the seventh angel 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 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 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, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest 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 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. \* \* \* \* \* And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with 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 sea of glass, having the 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, Lord God Almighty; just 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 behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony 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 angels seven golden vials full of the wrath 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 no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled. 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. 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. 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 their deeds. And the sixth angel poured out his 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.

THE seventh trumpet is developed in the seven vials. In this place commences the account of the outpouring of the vials, containing the seven last plagues, which, when all exhausted, will complete the destruction of the kingdom of the beast, or the empire of Anti-Christ. These events are introduced in different passages, suiting the structure of the book. The writing *within* and *without* is connected by parrallel lines. The part without the scroll continued to the end of the 14th chapter. Then the part within, which had been broken off suddenly at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, (chaps. xi. 15-19,) is resumed in chap. xv, which contains an account of the worship and acknowledgment of God previous to the execution of the commission of the vial bearers. Then chap. xvi. as far as verse 12, proceeds with the details of the outpouring. We must connect these two portions together, so that they may

appear in their relation to each other. The remainder of chap. xiv. (*i.e.*, from verse 6, up to which we have proceeded in our remarks,) carries us on continuously towards the completion of God's judgments against apostate Christendom. These we shall notice in our onward course in the further developments of the seventh trumpet.

The 15th chap. mentions seven vial-bearing angels, coming forth out of the temple with the seven last plagues—angelic agencies are mentioned according to the Apocalyptic method: these have their anti-type in earthly agencies. They come from the temple, and not from any earthly localities. If so, it would have been the symbol of foreign invasion, but as coming from the temple it indicates especially the hand of God; and as being from a local, and not a foreign cause. They are habited in pure linen, which intimates that the judgments they dispensed were sent from the immediate presence of God, and also the purity and justice of their operations. And the vials were given to them by one of the four living creatures, or the representatives of redemption, also intimating that these judgments were to be inflicted on account of the neglect and abuse of redemption. They came out of the temple having the seven last plagues, before the vials were put into their hands; but we may understand by this, they were the agencies commissioned and sent by God to distribute the contents of the vials they were to receive at the hands of the living creatures. In these vials is filled up the wrath of God. It was said, chap. x. 7, that the mystery of God was

to be fulfilled under the seventh trumpet: that is, under this symbol all God's gracious purposes respecting mankind are to be accomplished—all his wrath is to be inflicted upon the rebellious—the Gospel scheme is to close—Christ will vacate the throne of grace, and deliver up the kingdom to the Father—he will judge mankind, and render to every man according to his deeds. Therefore all that follows in the world will be included in this trumpet.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet succeeded very shortly after the assertion, "the second woe is past, behold the third woe cometh quickly," (chap. xi. 14.)

On the sounding of the seventh angel 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, (chap. xi. 15.) Then the twenty-four elders, the representatives of the ministry of the church, fell upon their faces, as in profound adoration, and acquiescence in God's will, and gave thanks to God, the matter of which is given (chap. xi. 17, 18.) What follows in chap. xv. 2-4, seems to be the same scene continued in connection with the preparation for the action of the vial-bearers, which would immediately follow the trumpet's peals. In the 15th chap. compared with chap. xiv. 1, the 144,000—the representatives of the true and faithful in the church—are introduced as engaged in this scene of praise, in union with the representatives of the ministry, as before noticed. They are said to stand on a sea of glass, a figure which will be explained in a subse-

quent discourse. Those who stood on this moulten sea were such as had gotten the victory over the beast, his image, and his mark, and over the number of his name, and they sang the song of Moses and the Lamb. All this harping and singing is a prelude to the judgments and triumphs of the seven vials. It is said, chap. xi. 19, that the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was rendered visible the ark of his testament. The same thing is mentioned in chap. xv. 5, which is, as we have said, a continuation of the former scene. The representatives of the church and its ministry are described as rejoicing in the final triumph of the Gospel, and in coincidence with this, God bestows upon his faithful people, and ministering servants, a glance of the ark of his covenant, his covenant to save and bless all mankind by the Gospel. The temple is opened—the Gospel church opened to receive into it all the heathen nations: and their ready admission to the covenant mercies of God, which were set before, and clearly exhibited to the world. Many a believing view of this nature have God's people taken, for which they have thanked God, and taken courage.

As the mystery of God will be fulfilled under the seventh trumpet, by anticipation we see Christ reigning over all; the time of the dead; the rewarding of the saints; and the destruction, of the destroyers of the earth (chap. xi. 18.) All this, as it proceeds, it appears, creates an excitement among the nations of apostate Christendom. The same thing is written in the second psalm; and we certainly

realize something of it in the present day: but at the same time we are assured of Christ's final triumph.

But the opening of the temple of God, and the display of the Ark of the Testament, are attended with lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail; all which, probably indicate some political revolutions and commotions. The last term, "great hail," evidently refers us to the north of Europe. We have several times remarked that there is always a geographical propriety in the figures of this book; and these terms may imply some commotions in Europe, some time previous to the outpouring of the entire vials, occasioned by the Emperor of Russia, and which may hasten on the final struggle which must eventually take place.\*

The *French revolution* agrees *chronologically* with the figures of these vials; because it was the next event after the *second woe*; and because it came soon after, viz., only seventeen intervening years transpired from the cessation of the Turkish woe, to the commencement of this event.

There were various *prognostications*, and *anticipa-*

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\* These discourses were sketched and preached some time before the late contests between Russia and the Allies. The writer therefore, had then only his eye on the prophecy, and on the probabilities of its application. But it would now appear very possible that there may be great consequences involved in the present struggle. And what is remarkable is the origin of this war was on a religious account, ostensibly to vindicate the rights of the Greek church; but really to prevent the spread of Gospel truth.

tions of the coming troubles, or woe. The announcement, "the third woe cometh quickly," seems to suggest this: it *speaks the language of apprehension*.

The political state of things seemed to augur peace. Political power was well balanced. Barbarian eruptions were shut out; and the Turkish woe was spent. The peace concluded in 1783 seemed to promise a long repose. Nevertheless there were indications of approaching trouble. Both Infidel and Christian philosophers were apprehensive of the reality. Voltaire and other infidels, express themselves to this intent. Christian philosophers saw iniquity and infidelity abounding, and piety declining. The Protestant church had lost sight of its great vocation, to witness for Jesus, preaching a dry heathen morality. The symbol seemed to have some literal fulfilment, as we have previously remarked respecting other figures. There were hail-stones, hurricanes, earthquakes, which were prevalent, and made great ravages throughout a great part of Europe. These are noticed by the writers of the times as unusual and portentous.

At length the great political revolution of the age, sent as a scourge from God, broke out. We have seen the chronological propriety of the application of this event to the period arrived at in the succession of the Apocalyptical figures; and now we shall see *the propriety of the figures themselves* to the circumstances of the event. In 1788, the States General of France were assembled, and within two months they overturned every thing in church and state—the democratic spirit broke forth, and all ob-

servicing persons were aware that a drama of supernatural agency had opened. The vials were given to the angels by one of the four living creatures, and we shall be able to discern, that all these fearful transactions, now to take place, were consonant with *God's love in redemption*; and that redeeming mercy required an interference on account of the *rejection of its provisions*. We ought distinctively to notice that the act indicates that the judgments about to be inflicted will be *righteous retributions* for the rejection of redeeming love, and for opposition to his truth and saints. The witnesses for Jesus, and the church in the wilderness, stand prominently before us: souls, added to those beneath the altar, have mingled their cries with those originally there. God had heard their appeals, and now comes out of his place to commence those righteous acts of retributive justice.

*Seven* vials full of the wrath of God are to be poured out, by way of accomplishing these designs: *five* are now considered to be applicable to the event we have enunciated. The plagues resembling those of Egypt were to fall on the spiritual Egypt, and it seems to be indicated that there was to be something analogous to the seven plagues of Egypt.

The localities on which they were to fall are substantially the same as those on which the judgments of the first four trumpets fell.

The *first* vial (chap. xvi. 2.) "The first angel went and poured out his vial on the earth, and there fell noisome and grievous sores upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them

which worshipped his image.” The first vial seems to indicate *the spirit and principle of judgment*, now commencing against the apostate nations of Christendom.

The word *elkos* signifies ulcer: *elkos kakon* a noisome and grievous ulcer. The same word is used in the Sept. Ex. ix. 9, where it is translated *boil*, for the most painful of the plagues. It is elsewhere in scripture spoken of in several grievous cases, as in those of Job, Hezekiah, and the beggar Lazarus. The sore, or ulcer alluded to, is thought to be indigenous to Egypt, and as we have remarked Rome is called the *spiritual Egypt*. It was noisome, loathsome, painful and infectious.

Turning from the body natural to the body politic, the word is used in a figurative sense to denote *some outbreak of social and moral evil—some dreadful corruption* which should be deep rooted, inflammatory, and contagious, to fall on Papal Europe some time after the second woe. In the same manner, the term is applied by the prophet Isaiah (i. 6.) “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.” By this allusion he describes the national corruption of his age.

These corruptions had long been gathering by the writings of the French infidels, and by the licentiousness of the clergy. I can do no more than barely refer you to the historians of the age for the descriptions of these enormities—only remarking that the bare perusal of them will fill your souls with horror. And the fruits soon began to mani-



fest themselves. The deadly infection spread far and wide, and contaminated all classes, and corrupted the fountains of all morality.

The French revolution was at first hailed as a foundation for true liberty ; but the very eulogizers of it soon saw reason to change their note, and to express their horror of its principles : and in doing so they made use of terms which represented it as an infectious disease.

The horrid cruelties, massacres, and carnage, during “ the reign of terror,” are well known, being copiously detailed in history. The Popish clergy suffered the confiscation of all their revenues. Added to all this, the atrocious blasphemies which were uttered. The revolutionists attempted to dethrone the king of heaven. Thousands publicly abjured the Christian faith : the leaders of the revolution appeared at the bar and declared that God did not exist, and that the worship of reason was to be substituted in its place. The goddess of reason was installed, and the temple of reason was dedicated. The sabbath, and all religious emblems and worship, were abolished. A public procession in mockery of Christianity was acted. The baneful *sore* spread throughout Europe, and especially throughout the Roman Catholic kingdoms.

All this answers truly to the symbols. The whole head was indeed sick, and the whole heart faint : there was nothing but putrifying sores. In this way God gave them up to work all manner of sin and uncleanness with greediness.

This evil not only arose *in* spiritual Egypt—in

Roman Catholic *countries*—but *out of* Roman Catholic *principles*—out of the corruptions of the Papal religion. Superstition had its reverse action in infidelity, and is producing this effect all over the world. Man's reason revolts at the dogmas of that corrupt system, and his moral nature shrinks at the horrid cruelties and oppressions practised by its direct sanction.

The *second* vial, (chap. xvi. 3.) “ 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.”

The parallel judgment of the second trumpet was a great mountain, burning with fire, cast into the sea, and it became blood. This indicated bloody wars in the maritime provinces and powers, and affecting the commerce of Rome. In like manner we interpret this vial in reference to the principal Papal nations, viz., France, Spain and Portugal. All this was realized in the wars of the French revolution. England was destined to be the hand to take the vial, and to pour out its contents. The French lost St. Domingo, a West Indian colony, then the most flourishing of their colonial possessions, which was wrested from them by the coloured population ; and which was erected into the Negro republic of Hayti ; and recently formed into an Empire. There, 50,000 blacks were slaughtered, and the white colonists were exterminated. A 22 years naval war, commencing 1793, and concluding 1815, between France and England, was carried on ; during which the French ships, commerce and small

colonies, including those of their allies, Holland and Spain, were destroyed. Nearly 200 ships of the line were demolished—between 300 and 400 frigates, and an almost incalculable number of smaller vessels of war and ships of commerce. And finally the same was the fate of all the Papal States. The great Spanish and Portuguese colonies of South America revolted, and established their independence. Thus it might be said, figuratively, “and every living soul died in the sea.” The sea “became as the blood of a dead man.” All these were participators in the great heresy of Antichrist; and all reaped, at the hands of retributive justice, these awful results.

The *third* vial, chap. xvi. 4–7, “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.”

The parallel judgment, under the third trumpet, was the falling of a great star from heaven upon the rivers and fountains. This star was called Wormwood: and has been explained of the desolating wars of Attila, in the region of the Danube, Rhine, and the Alpine streams that feed the Po. Here the vial is poured on the rivers and fountains of the Roman earth: of course the local scene of judgment is similar; and we expect to see the symbol verified in wars and bloodsheds on this region. This we do actually behold in the records of the French revolution, under Napoleon.

In April, 1792, war was declared by the French

national assembly, against the Emperor of Germany; and in September following against the king of Sardinia : and some time afterwards against the Republic of Venice, and the king of Naples. The contest lasted for several years. The rivers and vallies were literally filled with blood. Europe has never beheld anything so sanguinary. To describe these various contests would be to relate the history of the period. We must leave you to the various accounts published, and especially to the history of Alison.

But what was the reason for these judgments? No doubt they had many national sins. But there was another cause. St. John says, "And I heard the angel of the waters say, thou art righteous," &c. And another angel out of the altar, said, "Even so Lord God 'almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments." From this we should infer that these things were retributive judgments for their conduct to the Waldenses, the Huguenots, the Vaudois, the Hussites, and the Lutherans: and the voice from the altar involves a charge of neglect of the only sacrifice for sin, so eminently the crime of Romanists. Alison, the great historian, was so struck with the peculiarity of these judgments, that he remarks, the impartial justice of providence made that terrible period the means of punishing the national sins of the contending parties. On every place where a Spaniard, a Frenchman, or an Austrian suffered was the spot where they had committed their murders on the Protestant martyrs and witnesses. The words in the text seem to be so placed, as though this fact was to be specially noted.

The *fourth* Vial—poured out upon the sun, (chap. xvi. 8, 9.) In the parallel judgment of the fourth trumpet, the fourth part of the sun, moon and stars, was darkened. Its fulfilment was the extinguishment of the kingdom of Augustulus, the Emperor of the West, by Odoacer. So in its application to the fourth Vial, there is a reference to the reigning civil powers of the ten kings, and more especially of the German Emperor, who had held for 1000 years, from the days of Charlemagne, the title of Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1806 Napoleon forced him to renounce this title, and to content himself with that of Emperor of Austria. This was eminently an extinguishment of the sun of Christendom. This is an occurrence chronologically subsequent to the occurrences of the previous Vial. In addition to this act, Napoleon made his brother Jerome king of Westphalia—his brother Joseph king of Spain and Portugal—his general, Murat, king of Naples—and his brother Louis king of Holland. The king of Prussia had half his dominions torn from him and annexed to Saxony, to whose Elector he granted the title of king. These events happened in the years 1806, 7, and 8. During the outpouring of this vial, more kings were unmade and made than ever had been before known in Christendom.

And power was given to this angel, or agent, to scorch men with fire. As formerly explained, we are to look for the representation of the angel to the earthly agent. Napoleon was that agent. There is generally something of the literal, as well as

symbolical, in the fulfilment of these symbols. Dr. Keith thinks there is an allusion in this expression to the artillery used by the French Emperor, as the great instrument of his victories. We have seen the fire of the sixth trumpet, as that by which the Greek empire was to fall, exemplified in the artillery used to effect it. And this was strikingly evinced in this case. The name given to Napoleon, by his soldiers, was *the king of fire*. His fire, whether by artillery or musketry, was the most overwhelming of any that ever went before. The symbolical fulfilment was a sore and terrible torture inflicted during the effusion of this vial. And certainly indescribable afflictions and sufferings were inflicted and experienced throughout the whole career of Napoleon.

Notwithstanding the severity of these judgments they repented not, to give God glory—they altered not their course, but still despised the grace of God.

The *fifth* vial—poured upon the seat or throne, or power of the beast.

The beast is the same as is described in the preceding discourse. The throne, or power of the beast, is the dominant sway he exercises.

Just at the close of the last event in the fourth vial, after the battle of Wagram in 1809, Napoleon issued his decree, whereby the Pope's temporal authority over the Roman State was abolished, and Rome itself incorporated with France, as part of the French empire. There had been many previous insults and inflictions to the Roman power. The national assembly had previously taken away the

tythes which the Pope held to be sacred to himself, and had confiscated the lands belonging to the church. Four thousand rich monastic houses were suppressed in France. The clergy were required to abjure all allegiance to the Pope. The Romish religion was, by act of assembly, abolished; many churches were plundered, and thrown down; and others were desecrated by being made into stables, barns, &c. It was stated that 15,000 cannon could be cast out of the church bells, and the lead coffins into cannon balls: 4,000 Roman priests were massacred, and thousands of others became exiles. After all these events, it was that Napoleon marched to Rome; the Pope surrendered Peter's patrimony and Napoleon issued that decree, by which he was dismissed from his temporal power. At that very time the Pope was sitting in that very hall which was ornamented with representations of St. Bartholomew's day.

As observed in the last discourse, this terminates one of the epochs of the 1260 days. The vial, however, has since then been issuing its lingering drops. In 1835, church property was confiscated in Portugal, Spain, and France. The States of Italy were opposed to the reign of the Pope, and the patriots have attempted to dislodge him. In 1848, the danger seemed imminent, and the Pope fled in disguise. And at this very moment Spain, Sardinia, &c., are rudely handling the Pope's power and the church's patrimony: Italy is agitated like a heaving earthquake, or threatening volcano, and ready to burst out into a flame. What is there in the history

of the present period more prominent than hatred and opposition to Rome : and if the people dare but act, they would overturn her power at any moment.

During this vial the kingdom has been full of darkness. Popish adherents have gnawed their tongues for pain ; and have blasphemed God because of their pains and their sores ; yet they have not repented of their deeds, but have blasphemed God. Blasphemy is speaking injuriously against—usurping to themselves, or ascribing to others the prerogatives and honors of God. We need not say how much Popery does this. And all their former acts they are reproducing, and tenaciously retaining their old dogmas and superstitions, yea, even are increasing them, and thus are filling up the measure of their iniquity.

God judges nations in this world, in their corporate capacity : they cannot be judged in eternity as nations. The Papal nations have been bitterly judged ; and as they have not yet repented, there are other vials yet in store to be poured out upon them.

Let us admire and adore God for his judgments, for he is righteous and good in all his proceedings. Let us avoid all sin, for he will visit it on whomsoever found.





## DISCOURSE XII.

THE SIXTH VIAL—DRYING UP OF THE EUPHRATES—PREPARATION OF THE WAY FOR THE KINGS OF THE EAST—THE THREE UNCLEAN SPIRITS—THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON.

REV. xvi. 12-16.—“ And the sixth angel poured out his 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 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 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, 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 together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

THE river Euphrates is a celebrated river of Asia ; first mentioned in Genesis as one of the rivers of paradise. In Deut. i. as the “ great river,” and commonly “ as the river,” being by far the most considerable river of western Asia. The Euphrates was the boundary of the possessions promised to the descendants of Abraham. The Euphrates proper divides Syria from Assyria, or Babylonia, passing the North of Syria ; or it divides the land given to the people of God from that of the heathen. It has always been and still is an object of great interest, and connected with some of the most remarkable events in the history of the world. The river Euphrates was formerly used by the prophets as a figure for the Assyrian power. It appears to be here used for the Turkish power : not only on the

consideration, that it runs through what is now their territory, but as we have seen in a former discourse, the Seljukian Turks were commissioned from the Euphrates.

I. *The drying up of the river Euphrates.*

What is plainly intimated by the figures in the text, is, that there is a *hindrance* or *impediment to a certain people coming to Christ, which is to be removed.* That hindrance is said to be, in the figurative language of the text, the river Euphrates. That river, we have said, denotes the Turkish power. Mohammedanism prevents its votaries from changing their religion, it being certain death to do so. The people whose way is to be opened by the wasting of this power are denominated the kings of the east, some people who are at present prevented from embracing Christianity by this power; but who will have facilities afforded by its dissipation. Thus much we affirm by way of general statement, but the particulars will come more fully under review.

We have said that the river Euphrates denotes the Turkish, or Mohammedan power—the same Turkish power as is described under the sixth trumpet, when the angels (or agents employed by God) are said to be loosed from the river Euphrates. It had overflowed from its banks and had inundated Grecian Christendom; and now the symbolic flood is to be dried up.

The time of the *commencement* of this evaporation was marked by Daniel's vision of the ram and he-goat (chap. viii.) The former part of the vision is plain, because it is explained by the angel. The

latter part is more difficult, as the angel did not describe distinctly respecting the little horn—the *place*—or the *time* of the action—or the *people* it was to desolate. However, we learn,

1. It was to *originate* out of one of the four Macedonian kingdoms.

2. As to the *time* of its rise, it was to be at the latter time of their kingdom.

3. The little horn was to be a *king of a fierce countenance*, causing to understand dark sentences.

4. He was to have *great success*.

5. He was to *cast the truth to the ground*, and to cause craft or deceit to prosper in its stead; to take away the daily sacrifice, to cast down Jehovah's sanctuary, and to cast down the secular religious powers, the sun and stars of the symbolic heavens; and all because of their apostacy. He would magnify himself against the prince of the host. This should continue 2300 days, and then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. Who is this *desolator*? We may be guided in forming the answer by considering, who are the *transgressing people*. The Jews are not intended. And therefore it may be affirmed that Antiochus is not the desolator intended in the passage. Neither are the Romans intended as the desolator. There are only two powers that ever did desolate the Jewish sanctuary, and they did it literally. The prophetic phrase sanctuary must have a mystical meaning, *viz., professing Christian*. The *Turks* answer best the description. It is a power which rose suddenly into a mighty empire. It was a desolator of Greek Christendom, and the propaga-

tor of the Mohammedan false religion—a religion of *craft*, and which tramples down the truth. St. John describes so prominently the Anti-Christ as the little horn of the fourth beast, that this would appear to be the Mohammedan imposture. Both were directly opposed to Christ. This power has been brought upon the stage, and we may expect to see it dismissed. The origin of this power was noticed under the figure of the Euphratian horsemen, so it is but natural to describe its destruction. The same inspiring spirit directs both John and Daniel to the same power.

This power originated in the ancient Parthia. The Seljukian Turkmans are the people. They had an early connection with Bagdad, and Bagdad was one of the chief of the four horns.

We must look at the *terminating period* of the vial. “Till how long shall the vision be?” asked one angel of another. The answer is for 2300 days, or years. Then shall be the cleansing of Greek Christendom from the Turkish pollution and deceit. But where is the commencement? Does it date from the commencement of the vision; or from the little horn’s desolations? The latter would bring us down to A.D. 3350, which would be far beyond all that is noticed in the range of prophecy. The date, then, must be taken from the commencement of the action of the vision. It cannot be placed either before the rise, or after the fall of the Persian empire. Each of these dates, as well as other transactions, may be regarded as epochs. The rise of the Persian empire was about B.C. 538, or 536. Xerxes’

defeat was 480. B.C. 480, taken from 2300, brings us to 1820. Then, as from the commencing period, the drying up of the Turkish flood would have a commencement. Accordingly we find this was the year of the first revolutions in the Turkish provinces by Ali Pasha. The battle of Navarino followed in 1827, which occasioned the freedom of Greece. By these, and by other occurrences about the same time, the Turks suffered such a defeat, that they have only since existed by the suffrage of Europe, and the river Euphrates began to be dried up. No doubt these various events have commencing epochs in their history. And here again, as in the case of the first little horn, or Anti-Christ, we may be in difficulty to fix upon the full and final commencing epoch. Yet there are minor events which will show us we are in the train, and that the business is progressing; and also that the final period of the accomplishment cannot be far distant. The fall of the Persian empire was in the year B.C. 330. There might be various points taken after 480, but it is impossible to fix upon any one with any degree of certainty.

The period of this epoch (1820,) or allowing for a slight misapprehension (1819) was fixed upon long before the transactions we have mentioned occurred, viz., by Becheno, in 1797. It is well known that since 1820 this empire has lost province after province, and now but feebly holds the rest. In 1822 the Greek provinces rebelled. Then Russia entered into conflict with the Turks,—exhausted her resources, and crippled her energies. Next the Jan-

issaries were broken up. They were stripped of Greece, Egypt, Algeria, and of the entire control of Wallachia and Moldavia, and all the north of the Danube. Afterwards Servia was separated. Her trade and manufactories were destroyed. In 1825 6000 houses were destroyed by fire in Constantinople. Two other conflagrations destroyed 15,000 houses. The plague continually carries off its population. The whole empire is in a state of exhaustion. The depopulation of these once populous countries has been rapidly progressing. Earthquakes, famines, and pestilence, have been at work accomplishing this event, and civil wars have aided the consummation. "Within the last twenty years," says a British resident, about the year 1836, "Constantinople has lost more than half of its population. Within that period from 300,000 to 400,000 have been prematurely swept away in this city of Europe." There are various other causes for this desolation, besides those named, at work. The capital requires a continual replenishment, and the countries surrounding are continually drained to supply it; which nevertheless exhibits districts nearly depopulated. All efforts to arrest the process of extinction will fail: they only accelerate the catastrophe.

The Turks and Russians have been for some time in armed contest. What will be the result of the struggle none can tell. The Turks have shown more spirit and martial bravery than any one ever anticipated; considering their antecedents. The belligerents on both sides present the aspect of high

enthusiasm. They are animated with a religious frenzy, similar to the spirit of the Crusades. The Turks seem as though more prepared to fight for Islamism than for Turkey. By this it seems as though Divine Providence was directing the blow more at the system, than on the country. And the Russians seem to regard themselves as set for the defence of the faith. The war does not appear to be an ordinary one, but of a religious character. But if Turkey survive the contest she has within herself the elements of dissolution, and some other outbreak will probably soon take place; or there may be an internal exhaustion which no diplomacy and no armed intervention can arrest. We cannot say as yet whether any thing decisive will be the result of the hostilities just commenced. If the struggle goes on, how Russia can conquer Turkey, aided as she is by her powerful Allies, appears very problematical.

Since the above was sketched and preached, other events have occurred. An alliance of several continental powers has been formed with Turkey, and war has been actively engaged in. But how singular the circumstances! Far from all previous expectation, have the Allies found difficulties pressing upon them. They have gained splendid victories, but yet the prestige of glory seems lost in the overwhelming sufferings to which they have been incident. Prodigies of valour have been achieved, and yet there have been attempts to cover the able commanders with disgrace. The elements, disease, and an unfriendly soil, have proved more successful com-



batants, than the skill of an inveterate enemy. Perhaps all has been done which could have been done under the circumstances ; but notwithstanding the unsparing censures of mere lookers on, the evils were perhaps beyond control. Commanders have been blamed and vindicated ; ministers have been accused and defended ; cabinets have been broken up, and military chiefs recalled ; and yet every one who considers the subject is filled with perplexity and confusion. Does it not appear that God has his hand specially in operation in all this. Perhaps both parties are anxious for peace ; and diplomatists are now at work endeavoring to arrange terms for its accomplishment. They may succeed ; and Turkey may be left to the operation of the natural causes of her decay. It will be a singular and striking thing to see this power wasted and dissipated, notwithstanding nearly all Europe is combined to uphold it. Thoughts have sometimes occurred that this present conflict may lead to that general contest we have yet to consider in this discourse—the battle of Armageddon ; but it would seem that this is almost too premature as that will be proximate to the millennium, and there are several intervening events for although placed in the text, in immediate connection with the fall of Turkey, yet that is an event not yet realized.

From what appears to be contained in the text we might feel free to affirm that Turkey will not absolutely fall by the hands of Russia. The text seems to suggest the idea of a gradual, though rapid exhaustion and dissipation of the empire, as verified

by the example of the evaporation of a river. Were it to be a violent overthrow the figure employed would have been the rendings of an earthquake, or the bursting of a volcano. If peace should be now settled, and hostilities should cease, yet this late contest may tend to her extinction. Internal troubles may arise; and other provinces may be severed. Her numbers must have been already considerably diminished, even by the present war, and her internal resources must have been weakened. Perhaps some of the Christian provinces may declare their independence, and become organized as Christian states. Her characteristic Islam features and policy are already considerably nullified, and may be much more so by the requirement of the Allies; and thus she may not retain much power to stop the progress of Christianity. The Allies may insist upon a cessation of the persecution and death of any of her people, upon their embracing Christianity. And if this were the case the meaning of the text would be almost verified: and all this might more effectively do the work than even the devastating armies of Russia.

From a review of the text, and of the connecting passage, and also of the actual state of things in the Turkish empire, it would appear quite evident that that empire cannot long survive. One million Turks cannot maintain their sway over the fairest portions of Europe, with several millions of inhabitants who are professed Christians. Every thing there sinks into ruin: undrained morasses, rivers choked with sand, broad and fertile plains lying un-

cultivated, great cities with grass growing rankly in their market places: deserted vilages: broken arches, and crumbling fortresses. It will surely become an utter ruin. Perhaps a Christian empire will be formed in the place of it.

II. *Preparation of the way of the kings of the east.*

The drying up of the Euphrates, or the exhaustion of the Turkish Empire, is to *prepare the way* for the kings of the east, *i.e.*, impediments which exist, from the influence of this power, to a certain people's embracing Christianity, will cease upon the exhaustion of this power. Who those mysterious personages are it is not so easy positively to say.

The phrase is frequently explained to signify the restoration of the Jews to Palestine, and the removal of the Turks to facilitate their passage, and to put the possessions into their hands. But suppose it were certain that the Jews were to be restored to the holy land, yet I think this passage would have no reference to that event. Are all the Jews in the East? Are there none in England, on the continents of Europe, Africa and America, and in many other places? We nowhere find the *body* of this or any other nation characterized as *kings*. The phrase *kings*, in this book, generally occurs with the acceptance of kingdoms, or nations; and the Jews, in their dispersed state, are spoken of as a poor and afflicted people; rather than as dignified and honorable. When the gathering of Israel is referred to in such passages as are usually brought to substantiate their literal gathering, they are not spoken of as being brought from the east, but from *all quarters*.

“I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west: I will say to the north give up, to the south keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.” (Isa. xliii. 5, 6; see also Psa. cvii. 3; Isa. xlix. 12; Zech. viii. 9.)

Thus, if the opinion were established that Israel were to be literally gathered to Canaan, the accomplishment of that event would be no fulfilment of this passage. But the *literal gathering of Israel* is itself far from being satisfactorily proved. The passages above quoted, and many others of like import, are alleged in proof. But all these passages were written before the return from the Babylonish captivity; and I am not aware of one passage, to that purport, written by any prophet after that event had transpired. Now where a prophet says to a dispersed people, ye shall be gathered to your own land, what should it mean, but I will restore you from your captivity; and would not they all understand it in that sense? But it is said it has a reference to a more glorious, full, and complete restoration. This is very true; but not of a literal gathering. The words may have another and fuller completion; but in a spiritual sense. No prophecy, as far as I am aware, has two literal fulfilments. Many are to have one literal and one spiritual fulfilment. I take all such passages, then, as referring, in their secondary sense, to their gathering to the spiritual Zion. Isaiah, especially, is speaking of the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, by accessions of the true Israel, having previously spoken of

Christ's manifestation. The prophet speaks of their coming to Jerusalem and keeping the feast of Tabernacles. Is Jerusalem to be understood there literally? If so, then the Feast of Tabernacles must be understood literally also: and that would suppose they were to remain Jews, and not only so but the Gentile converts also must become converts to Judaism, and renounce Christianity, and to continue to reject Christ. But if the Feast of Tabernacles is to be understood in a spiritual sense, so also must Jerusalem be thus understood, and apply to the church of God. The whole scheme tends but to narrow, degrade, and secularize, God's designs by the Gospel; and it would merge the New Covenant into the Old; and render the Jews the people of God for Abraham's sake, and not on Gospel terms. As I do not admit of the literal gathering of the Jews as a probability, consequently I do not admit that the passage before us applies to that event.

The ten tribes of Israel were removed into Chaldea and Media, and it is said that the remains of them have been often traced. They have been mostly amalgamated with the heathen, but yet some tolerably distinct features of their origin are easily to be ascertained. It is thought that from the remnants of truth which still linger with them they may be more disposible to embrace Christianity than the rest of the inhabitants of those countries; and that about the time of the conversion of the Jews they may distinctly turn their attention to Christianity. If I could ascertain that the influence of the Mohammedan government was any impediment to the at-

tainment of that object, then I should be disposed to conjecture that the passage is applicable to them, in part at least ; and that the waning of the crescent would facilitate their conversion to Christianity.

It appears that the Turkish Empire is a barrier, in some way or other, to the conversion of the eastern nations. East from the Euphrates lies Persia, India, Tartary, Affghanistan, China, and several other countries. The inhabitants of several of these countries profess the religion of the prophet. It is impossible to say what the effect of the fall of Turkey, and the suppression of her faith, may have upon the inhabitants of these countries, and what effect may be produced by this event upon countries surrounding these, which are still Pagan. The destruction of one heresy or apostacy makes way for the further spread of truth. It leads to reflection, examination, and enquiry. Especially this may be the case if Turkey has proved an impediment to any of those nations receiving the Gospel.

We have already noticed that the Gospel church was to be opened under the seventh trumpet ; and that the mysteries of redemption, under the emblem of making visible the Ark of the Covenant, were to be manifested to the world. And by the fall of Turkey it appears that an obstruction will be removed out of the way for nations, with their sovereigns at their head, to come to the true Christian church. When Turkey falls, Seba, and Sheba, and Tarshish, will be converted. "The kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bring presents ; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down

before him : all nations shall serve him," (Ps. lxxii. 10-11.) There are numerous other passages to the same effect.

III. The *three unclean spirits, like frogs*.

After a certain process of the drying up of the Euphrates, (perhaps about the year 1830, or earlier in their incipient development,) these spirits are to make their appearance : and we must acknowledge, and here remark preliminarily, that of late years there have been appearances remarkably answering to them. It is a striking and impressive prediction. It indicates three several unclean or unholy *principles*, emanating from satanic influence, widely and rapidly diffusing themselves throughout Roman Christendom, and, in some of its modes of working, throughout the world, to corrupt the kings of the earth and all human affairs.

These are answerable in character to the dragon, beast and false prophet, for secondarily they proceed from them ; but they also truly answer in character to hellish spirits. They do not appear as disembodied spirits, neither under the bodily appearance of frogs, as Satan did formerly in the body of a serpent ; but it is Satan acting in alliance with human agencies, properly symbolized by frogs, from the nature of the actions performed.

The *dragon* is the old serpent, the devil, in ancient times enthroned in Pagan Rome. The *beast* is the Pope of Rome, who occupies the seat vacated by the dragon. The *false prophet* is the apostate ministry, and clergy. All these several agencies are combined in action.

Let us exactly recognize their *general characteristics*. *Frogs*, noisy, loquacious brawlers, or talkers; prating demagogues, as an ancient classic writer uses the term to signify; or impostors and flatterers, as another uses the term to signify. Tenaacious, setting forth schemes, and pertinaciously thrusting them upon mankind—*unclean*, unholy; not merely a negation of holiness, but actually polluted, vile, filthy. Dealing in *prodigies*—working miracles: leading men on by a kind of enchantment, or enthusiasm. Framing parties, or combinations, with hostility to the truth, so as to battle or oppose the Almighty. All *combined* howsoever distinct, yet having some points of junction. All these characteristics are easily applied to the several particular spirits, or principles.

What are these three principles thus characterized? Commentators and expositors give some trifling variations. Without enumerating what these have stated, we shall endeavour to present such views as in our judgment appear to answer the descriptions.

1st. The spirit from the mouth of the dragon, appears to signify, the spirit of *Infidel, democratic lawlessness and rebellion*.

Anarchy has spread over the world, and has left its devastating effects in every part. Under former vials we have noticed some instances on France. In England and in other places the abettors of this spirit have been remarkably active. Infidelity, Chartism, Socialism, and Infidel associations, have been, and still are numerous. Agitate! Agitate! is



their incessant cry. We have the Infidel press, and Infidel lectures. We have Infidelity in setting up something efficient in religion irrespective of God and his word. There have been many efforts to save mankind, to reclaim them from vice, sin and evil habits, independent of the Gospel and the holy spirit; and religion has been brought into a low state in consequence. To this class also belongs the Infidel Neological German school of divines. And in the same category we place *Mormonism* or a rival revelation *Millerism*, or a wild reckless trifling with God's revelation—*Spiritualism*, or counter and contradictive revelations. The church has suffered as well as the state. All churches have either been, or perhaps will be agitated. Scripture is set at naught in these dissensions. There have been many broad features of Infidelity in the *civil, social,* and *moral reforms* of the day. Our own church has deeply drank of this cup. While watching at a distance, I have always seen the spirit of Satan in the late agitations at home. Infatuation seems to have been the spirit by which the abettors of reform, so called, have been carried away.

The spirit out of the mouth of the beast is, doubtless the spirit of *Popery*.

Of late years the spirit of Popery has been, without doubt, very energetic. There has been, a renewal of miracles. The inquisition has been reinstated; nunneries and monasteries have been multiplied; the Jesuits have been revived. It does its work craftily with the higher powers, besetting statesmen with tenacious application, and

with a croaking cry. Its agents have insinuated themselves into the government affairs of Ireland, Canada, and other colonies; into France, and several nations of the Continent of Europe. They have associated their operations with agitators, as in Ireland, and in many other places. It is doing the work of the dragon, or allying itself with the evil spirit which proceeded out of his mouth: and indeed there is a union of the three spirits in action. The Pope saw that the spirit of democracy was prevalent in Europe, and accordingly he allied himself with the democrats of France, and other places. The priests are remarkable for appearing to act in coincidence with any popular feeling. In several places the balance of power has been with the Papist party; and they have been courted by statesmen, to secure a preponderance. Governments have run a mad race for the honor of patronizing Romish Bishops, Priests, &c.; and France has lent the aid of its ships and influence to palm them upon the weak inhabitants of the South Sea Islands.

All this has raised their hopes, and they have triumphantly boasted that all nations will soon submit to the Pope.

3rd. The spirit out of the mouth of the false prophet, or the spirit of *Priestcraft*—of the *apostate Priesthood*.

This spirit is to be distinguished from the spirit of Popery generally, as there is a distinct spirit proceeding out of the mouth of the false prophet. The false prophet was before represented as the mere instrument or agent of the Papacy; but in this repre-

sentation there appears more independency of action and enlargement of the sphere of operation. It prefigures the active energy of the priesthood, which has actually been specially manifested. It thus includes *ultra high churchism*, exalting themselves and the church; its rubrics, sacraments, authority, dogmas and traditions, to the disparagement of Christ's word, work and spirit. Puseyism is Popery without the Pope. Modern tractarianism is a part of the voice from the false prophet. The object of the tractarians is to reintroduce doctrines rejected at the reformation; to set up a Popish rule of faith; to establish the doctrine of the apostolical succession; to give a Popish sense to the Sacraments. The doctrines of purgatory, invocation of the saints, and even of the Papal supremacy, are held by them. It lays claim to the power of working miracles on the souls of men by the efficacy of sacraments: for this effect, according to their statements, is evidently produced without faith, or any other means, save by the mere sacrament itself. The abettors of these doctrines have, by their zeal and diligence, well nigh unprotestantized the established church of England and its branches in the colonies.\*

This spirit made its appearance just at the time when the drying of the Euphrates was conspicuous;

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\* I beg to be understood as not intending, in all that occurs in this paragraph, any unchristian feeling of hostility to the true and faithful members of the English church. Mr. Elliott, a warmly attached member of that church, and the present Archbishop of Canterbury have expressed similar sentiments, and in a more stringent manner, than is enunciated in the above.

when Greece, Algiers, &c., were severed from the Porte, about the time of the appearance of the spirit of Infidel democracy and rampant Popery. Its loquaciousness is remarkable. Its abettors seize every opportunity of propagating their views; in conversation, by formal discussion, by addresses from the pulpit, by the press, by lectures from professors' chairs, by tracts, sermons, essays, reviews, romances, novels, poems; by children's books; by newspapers; in music, and paintings; by church decoration, and architecture, and in short in every possible way they endeavour to effect their object.

There has been a supernatural influence accompanying all these spirits: but not that of the spirit of God. It is that spirit by which they are designated in the text—the spirit of the devil.

#### IV. The *Battle of Armageddon*.

Let it be distinctly noticed that this contest is to be brought about by the intervention of the three spirits above mentioned.

*Armageddon*—the mountain of Mageddon, signifies mountain of *gathering*; mountain of *destruction*; mountain of *delights*, or the *precious* mountain, the same as his *glorious holy* mountain; all of which terms ally it to the Christian church, and suggests that the church is to be the scene of the contest. It is in vain to connect it with the Jews, or their interests, for all the revelations in immediate connection with the passage concern the Christian church. There is no place actually now bearing that name. A town mentioned in Scripture bore the name of *Megeddo*, which is the place where occurred the

overthrow of the Canaanitish armies under the command of Sisera. Near to this place is a vast plain. It may be that from these circumstances we have the name introduced into the text. Ahaziah and Josiah died there. Whence it is that Zechariah (chap. xii. 10.) alludes to it as a comparison for some great events which are to take place in some future period. And the prophet alludes to the same circumstances in introducing this place as the scene of gathering all nations, that God may plead with them on the behalf of his people (the spiritual) Israel. Some say this gathering will be in Palestine; but this would be to literalize the name and the circumstances. The apostle here does not allude to any particular place; but most probably somewhere *within the Papacy, or at Rome itself*, will this gathering be for a contest in reference to spiritual matters. And God will thus plead by fire and sword in behalf of his spiritual Israel.

This is undoubtedly a prediction of some great and important contest into which the people of God will have to enter with their enemies. It is as yet future, and therefore nothing can with certainty be said respecting it. It will be a gathering together by some persons, or powers influenced by the three spirits mentioned;—the maturity of principles and feelings at present in operation. Perhaps it may actually be brought into operation by, or be connected with the fall of Turkey, as the text so closely connects it with that event. The multitudes gathered will be actuated by a spirit which will lead to some hostile opposition to true Christianity

and rational liberty ; upon which the friends of religion and true liberty will have to rise in opposition to them.

The gathering of all nations to Judea (understood spiritually as the church of God) is in several places alluded to by the prophets, and is very probably identical with the one mentioned in the text. (See Zech. xii. 6-14 : xiv. : Joel. iii. 9-17 : Isa. lxvi. 15, 16 ; Exek. xxxviii. 18-23 : Dan. xi. 40., is generally applied to the same time.) Ezekiel mentions some nations by name, as Magog, Meshech, Tebul, and Gog as the prince of this people, in which some plainly see the origin of the names Russia, Moscovites. In the division of the earth, mentioned in the 10th chapter of Genesis, Gog was to occupy the northern parts of Europe and Asia, afterwards denominated Scythia, and Magog is synonymous with the modern Russia. From hence it is inferred that Russia is the grand adversary that will be engaged against the people of God, and that the contest will be between other nations and that power. This would be a too literal interpretation of a part of an evidently mystical scene : and it appears the antagonists will be more general, and the places from whence they arise more in connection with Papal Christendom. That Russia may have some hand in some of these transactions is probable from some expressions wherein the north is especially alluded to : but most probably she will not be the only or the main antagonistic power, for the enemies of true Christianity are not all concentrated within the boundaries of that empire.

Perhaps this struggle will be brought about in somewhat of the following manner. The Papists flatter themselves that they are getting all power into their own hands. Yet this is a delusion. The ruling powers, and men in high places, are more in favour of them for political purposes, but the body of the people, especially the intelligent part, are almost universally against them ; but thus they are deceived, and perhaps Divine providence intends to lead them on to their destruction by these means. This delusion may encourage them to combine to put down true religion, and to suppress the spirit of enquiry.

It is thought by many that France will be the great advocate of Popery, and will prove the chief secular power employed by the three spirits to take the lead in gathering the kings of the earth to the battle of the great day of Almighty God. It is remarkable that three frogs is the old coat of arms of France : that three each, in two divisions, were on the armorial shield of Clovis : and that three were on the banner of Clovis. There was a medal found in the tomb of Childeric, on which was a frog.

The Protestant nations of the earth may be the leading opponents to this demonstration. Perhaps the United States of America may be brought into it, as seeing that if the European continental combination were to prevail, they could not eventually escape from molestation. On the side of the Protestant nations there may be many from Hungary, Italy, from the German states ; and all Bible Christians at present mixed up with every other Papist

nation. The leading insurgents may be France, Spain, Portugal, Austria, the Roman states of Germany and Italy. Yet we ought to allow that God may, previous to this event, overturn Popery in many of these states, as seems at present probable in Spain, &c.

Should all these come into collision, it will indeed be *the battle of the great day of Almighty God*, and it seems probable from the text that "all the kings of the (Roman) earth, and of the world" will be gathered to it.

There are many striking signs at present existing that such a state of things is approaching. It cannot be far off, for it is contained in the *sixth vial*, which is now far spent. It may take place much sooner than any of us imagine. The three evil spirits are now busily at work, and will surely accomplish their design.

Success must be on the part of God and of his elect—then the effects of this victory, and the destruction of this opposing army, will be preparatory to the destruction of the beast, which it appears will immediately follow.

There is, however, one previous event noticed, viz., the *tripartite division of the empire*, which will be considered subsequently.

The Lord reigneth, let opposers tremble. The Lord reigneth let the earth be glad.

"Behold," says Jesus, "I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." How impressively and repeatedly does Christ call upon



all men, and especially all Christians, to watch. And by this term he urges upon us to notice every event which occurs which are premonitions of the accomplishment of what he has infallibly declared shall transpire. May we be found watching.

## DISCOURSE XIII.

EVENTS CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH THE VIALS—THE HARPERS ON THE GLASSY SEA—THE ANGEL—PREACHER—DECLARATION OF THE FALL OF BABYLON—WARNINGS CONCERNING BABYLON—THE HARVEST, VINTAGE, AND WINE-PRESS.

Rev. xiv.—“ And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the 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 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 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 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 first fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile : for they are without fault before the throne of God. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of 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 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 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, saying with a loud voice, if any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his 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 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 of his name. Here is the patience of the saints : here are they that keep the commandments of 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 labors ; 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

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. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth : and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in 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 vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

IN the midst of the desolations denoted by the outpouring of the vials, the church of God exists, and works for the regeneration of men. We see a picture of this in the chapter before us. At the time of the awful corruptions of the Anti-Christian apostacy, the Lamb of God is vividly depicted. Undoubtedly, in the panoramic representations of this book, this vision of the Lamb is allusive to the actual prominence which has been given to the vital doctrines connected with the atonement, in these times, by all evangelical churches. The Lamb is accompanied by a host of his blood-washed followers.

A series of visions (written without the roll) continues to the end of the 14th chap. Then the former series (written within) broken off suddenly at the sounding of the seventh trumpet (chap. xi. 15,) is resumed in chap. xv. We have already traced this down through the outpouring of the first six vials.

But before we proceed with the seventh vial, we must examine this series of intervening and contemporaneous action predicted in this chapter.

These are the harpers on the glassy sea—the flying angel—the denunciations against Babylon, the final fall of which takes place under the seventh trumpet, and the warning of approaching judgments on the beast and his followers—an intimation of the blessedness of those pious persons who shall die—then the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, preparing to reap the earth's harvest, and finally to gather the vintage, and to cast it into the winepress of the wrath of God.—These visions take us down to the Millennium.

Let us take them in this order, which is their natural chronological arrangement.

I. *The harpers on the glassy sea.*

We have cursorily considered this image as it occurs in the opening vision, in the introductory discourse. And in another discourse we have noticed the characteristics of the one hundred and forty-four thousand, in connection with views of God's faithful people triumphing in the reformation of his church. Here they are to be considered as rejoicing in the prospect of the near and final destruction of their usurping adversaries.

Before those scenes of terror are depicted, we have a representation of these harpers, celebrating the praises of God in a new song. This seems to certify the peace and tranquility of God's people, at the time these judgments are progressing.

The 144,000, before introduced on the scene, are here mentioned as seen on mount Zion, with the Lamb, and under a new aspect, celebrating his praises. They are represented as those who *were*

*conquering*, for so the word signifies. Also, as standing *by* (not *on*) the sea of glass mingled with fire. Perhaps this is an allusion to the red sea, as a scene of judgment on God's enemies. When standing in a certain position before the red sea it has the appearance of molten glass, and the reflection of the rays of the sun upon it makes it appear as though mingled with fire. This representation of mingled fire betokens the calamities which fell upon the earth during the first five vials, and which were still in course of infliction. During this time, the safety of God's true Israel is strikingly indicated. They sang a song of triumph as those in the act of conquering. They acknowledge God's hand in these judgments, and in their salvation from them. A song similar to that Moses composed on the deliverance from their enemies at the red sea ; and in addition to this the song of the Lamb, who had shed his blood for their spiritual redemption.

II. *The angel-preacher, flying in mid-heaven.*

In the representations of this book, angels are generally commissioned with judgments ; but here we have one with a commission of mercy. This is a symbolic expression of something important in the period to which we have now chronologically arrived. The *action* of the angel is *preaching* ; and, therefore, some distinguished minister, at the head of others, is intended, and may be expected to appear on the theatre of the world : so most interpreters fix the sense. The *doctrine* is specified, which is not a new doctrine, but a revival of old ones. It was a change, in the form of a proclamation to

mankind, to make an actual recognition of the Divine Being, to entertain a fear, or reverence of him ; and an injunction to engage in his service. Therefore, in accordance with the doctrine of the prophets, and with that given in charge to the Apostles, it included *repentance*. The *zeal, activity, and wide sphere of labor* of the intended agent, are all shown by the *flying* of the angel in mid-heaven ; and by the predication to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people ; and by the *manner* of the proclamation ; it being with a loud voice, signifying strenuous earnestness. God has his special instruments to perform his own work, whom he raises up, and providentially directs in their course.

We have crossed the boundary line of the chronological period ; and we may now ask, who was the antitype of that angel. In order to fix upon a proper recognition of the identical individual, we must be careful to look at the exact chronological period to which this figure belongs. It was during the seventh trumpet, or the period occupied in the effusion of the seven vials ; or, in other words, during the miseries inflicted upon the Roman earth by the French revolution. This much is clear, for the narrative was broken off at that point, for the purpose of introducing this digression of intervening circumstances. It is further noticed as being some time previous to the fall of Babylon, and as one main cause of that catastrophe.

For greater explicitness, let us notice the state of religion at the period immediately preceding this great event. Towards the close of the eighteenth

century, as noticed by several eminent and candid writers of different denominations of Christians, the principles of the reformation were dying out; and the songs of the 144,000 were flagging and becoming extinct. Yea, even the latter days of Luther, and more especially those of Melancthon, were saddened by witnessing a declension of religion. But, at the period to which I now advert, this was glaringly prominent in every direction. In the German church, both Lutheran and Reformed, Neology became conspicuous; and its spirit extended to the neighboring churches of Sweden and Denmark. In Holland there was a death-like torpor. In the Swiss church direct Socinianism had taken the place of true piety and orthodoxy, among the followers of Calvin. In England, (since, the mother and nurse of true evangelical piety,) the state of things was truly deplorable. Cold rationalism and heathen morality prevailed. In both the churches of the establishment, and those of Dissenters, true vital piety was almost unknown. Were it not the case that I am bound to study brevity, I might quote the direct testimonies of competent witnesses among churchmen, and some of them in high stations; and of dissenters, whose means of acquiring knowledge of the facts were not limited. I will refer you to a picture drawn by Foster in his "Essay on the evils of popular ignorance." Abundant evidence of the same character might be drawn from the journals of Mr. Wesley. The Rev. R. Hall, in his "review of zeal without innovation," presents us with a sketch equally graphic. Leighton describes the church as

“ a fair carcase without a spirit.” Bishop Burnett says, “ the clergy were under more contempt than those of any other church in Europe ; for they were much the more remiss in their labors, and the least severe in their lives.”

This was the state of things prior to, and at the beginning of the seventh trumpet ; or, otherwise expressed, a little before, and at the time of the French revolution in 1788. But at this juncture an angel appears in the Apocalyptic scene, having the “ everlasting Gospel to preach ;” and the question again recurs, who is it that was symbolized by that angel ? In framing an answer let us strictly keep in view the two preceding observations, viz., the chronological period, and the state of the Protestant churches. On these principles we say, it was not any ancient class of ministers, for this would contradict the date, and bring us into confusion. Therefore, neither the Waldenses nor the Reformers can be intended ; but a more modern class of laborers. Mr. Elliott, and his generally faithful copyist Dr. Cumming, fall into an utter absurdity in affirming *Wilberforce* to be this angel. It is strange such a thought could ever have entered into the mind of any one. *Wilberforce* was not a public teacher, or preacher. Long before he entered on public life the revival had begun, and had considerably extended. We do not deny that this worthy man, by his useful writings, helped to blow up the already kindled fire ; but that he was the means of kindling it cannot for one moment be admitted, without contradicting the history of the times. Besides this, *Wilberforce*, in



the propagation of his sentiments, did not reach nations: he was not read any where but in England; and even not there by the multitude, only by the the middling and higher classes of society; and not universally even by the polished and educated.

A solemn and deep conviction of truth obliges me to ask, whom does this suit but *John Wesley*, and with him his coadjutors and followers? Some time before these outpourings of wrath he appeared on the scene; and with his brother, and Whitefield, and many other eminent men, began with zeal faithfully and extensively to preach the Gospel. In 1738 he began his missionary career. Foster, Hall, Southey, and Isaac Taylor, distinctly bear record that they were the honored instruments in the hands of God in reviving true religion, as the second reformers of England; and, in fact, of the Protestant world generally.

This view of the subject is further corroborated by a view of their *doctrine and practice*. They preached evangelical doctrines. They strenuously insisted upon repentance, and enforced experimental religion: they earnestly enforced the terrors of the law, for the awakening of sinners, answering to that in the symbol—"fear God, for the hour of his judgments is come." And they performed all this with extraordinary zeal. Their doctrine and practice produced impressions, and promoted a revival in all evangelical churches.

The *Missionary* era was commenced in consequence of their efforts, for almost all evangelical churches have established Missionary societies;

and the founders of those societies have been men who were raised up in some of the churches revived through either their immediate or remote instrumentality. The sphere of their own labors is wide, encompassing almost the whole world. The remarkable saying of this wonderful man—"the world is my parish"—exemplifies this fact. The followers of Wesley have missions established in *Europe*—Ireland, France, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Germany, Norway, &c.,—In *Asia*—India, China, &c. Their mission stations stud almost every part of the map of *Africa*.—In *America*—Oregon, California, various parts of South America, and among the Aborigines of the continent, and numerous missions among the destitute settlers, both of the Anglo-Saxon and other races; also in the West Indies, and in the British possessions of North America. In the *South Seas*, they have extensive, important, and very prosperous missions, as are those in Australia, and the numerous islands. Their missionary societies, especially including the English and American branches, form the largest in the world. The first Wesleyan Mission was to America in 1770, and the world is acquainted with the amazing results. The missionary society was not, however, organized as a society until 1800, although missions previously existed under the management of the conference, and Dr. Coke, down from the former date. Missionary Societies formed by other churches have since sprung up. The Baptists sent Missionaries into the field in 1793. The London society in 1799. The Jews society was formed

in 1809. The Church, the Scottish and other Missionary Societies have followed.

All this answers to the declarations and symbols introduced on the first mention of the sounding of the seventh trumpet (chap. xi.) "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ;" which is generally supposed to have been uttered by way of anticipation of the results of Gospel preaching. And, "the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in the temple the Ark of his Testament." And what will follow is as truly notified in the 8th verse of this chapter, viz., "Babylon is fallen." God's covenant is thus rendered visible to men, and made known to all nations. The appearance of the Lamb on Mount Zion, mentioned ver. 1, seems of the like character. At this juncture when Christ was to be thus preached, it seems to betoken a more than usual vivid manifestation of Christ in his atoning character.

Now can we suppose that such a great movement, producing such truly important effects, would be left unnoticed in the Apocalypse, which reveals every important event relative to the progress and final triumph of the church of Christ. And does not Wesley and Methodism answer the symbolization? It certainly does, and there is nothing else transpiring at that period which fulfils the prophecy. This consideration stamps a deep responsibility on all who bear the name Wesleyan. Our duty is to keep up in ourselves the spirit of the system, and to be indefatigable in spreading scriptural holiness over all lands. Happy are they who are incorporated in

such a system ; and who faithfully persevere in the duties connected with it to the end !

Mr. Cunningham, and others, interpret the figure of the angel-preacher, by applying to it the operations of the *Bible Society, solely*. But this application is not in point, for it merges the *distinctive action* of the symbol—*preaching*. This may be a collateral circumstance, and one which results from the revival of evangelical preaching. It was in this age of evangelical effort, and arising legitimately and immediately from its action, that the Bible Society came into existence. And the operations of that blessed society are directed by the identical motives of the preachers themselves, viz., to make Christ known : but this does not destroy or nullify the leading action, and the cause from which it emanates.

The Bible Society was established March 7th, 1804, and entered upon its jubilee March 7th, 1853. In 1852, there were 3270 branches in Great Britain. In the colonies and dependencies of Great Britain, 549. In Ireland, 503. The foreign branches numbered 4,000 : making a total of 8322. There were about 50 translations at the time of its establishment : but now there are 150 languages in which it is translated and circulated. In 1853, 1,168,794 copies were circulated, making a total from its commencement of 26,571,103 ; besides assistance given to other societies in the distribution of about 19,000,000 more ; making a total of about 45,000,000 copies, in whole, or in part. By these means *the holy Scriptures are put within the reach of not less than 600,-*

000,000 of the human race. This has been done at the expense of £3,950,993 7s. 5d. What a work has been accomplished since the angel-preacher first began to soar through mid-heaven! Surely, by one means or other, he has well nigh traversed over the world, and when the Gospel is preached to all nations then shall the end come.

III. *The annunciation of the fall of Babylon, by the second angel.*

This event evidently follows close upon the universal preaching of the Gospel, as noticed in the preceding figure. When the everlasting Gospel has been fully preached to all them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people: then undoubtedly soon the second angel will exclaim, "Babylon is fallen." Or, perhaps, in the midst, or towards the close of these active, evangelical labors, we may expect the sudden downfall of that system of error: and, perhaps, close in connection with the great contest considered in the last discourse. Then, and by these means, the hour of God's judgment will come.

The detail of the miseries which will be the lot of the deluded adherents of the beast is given in the words of the third angel; and in the appearance of the Son of Man with a sickle, to reap the ripe harvest of the earth; and again in the symbol of treading the winepress. In the 18th chapter it is again the mighty cry of another angel, "Babylon is fallen," and her miseries are again noticed. All these predictions will be fulfilled by the destruction of Babylon, and by concomitant events. These will be days

of vengeance: great and dreadful will be the judgments which will be then inflicted: and it is evident the world is preparing for them. But as these events are fully developed in the seventh vial, under other symbols, (the part written within, and is parallel in chronological order with the text,) we shall not farther pursue them here, only so far as the special figurations demand a passing notice.

Babylon *intoxicated* the nations with the wine of the wrath of her fornications; and she shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. The intoxication alluded to seems to have a verification in the infatuation, the enthusiasm, and in the spiritual stupor which accompanies the steadfast belief of these doctrines. The torments are eternal fire and brimstone. The *indignation* shows the despite, and setting of naught by the gracious and Divine Being; in comparison to their own spirit and conduct in dealing with all opponents.

The symbol of the angel denouncing Babylon, seems to have its analogy in the universal voice of God's servants. Never has there been a period when there has been so much active energy displayed in opposition to Popery, as of late years. The press has literally teemed with publications on the errors and evils of Popery. The pulpit has uttered its warning voice. Reformation societies and Protestant associations have been formed in many different places.

The *present time* places us at the period of Apocalyptic symbol when the fifth vial has far spent itself,

there being, probably, only a few remaining lingering drops to fall. We see Popery actually weaker, notwithstanding her attempts to strengthen herself by political alliances. The main body of the people, in many parts, secretly curse her. She is combining with infidelity, radicalism and puseyism, to maintain her stand for some time. She is only upheld by the power of the kings, until the time come that they hate her, and destroy her. All this strongly suggests the speedy overthrow of the system.—We are evidently in the period of evangelical missions, or the time when the *first* angel is crying with a loud voice. We are in that period when Babylon is solemnly protested against, and denounced; and hence *near to the time* when the *second* angel shall declare she is *fallen*. We are witnessing the gradual decline of the Turkish empire, and plainly perceive that the sixth vial is fast dislodging its contents. We are therefore *fast advancing to the seventh vial*, which will see the total and final overthrow of Babylon. Yea, if even that vial has not already begun to issue some of its contents. Oh! how we should arm ourselves with faith, and prayer, and labor!

IV. How solemn is the *warning of the three angels*, and how dreadful are the judgments they denounce. “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God,” &c., (ver. 9–11.) O! ye of temporizing, latitudinarian temperament, beware! Hear what he says in another place, “come out of her my people, lest ye partake of her plagues.”

V. In the mean time, the existence of these judgments will make it a blessed thing to *die in the Lord*. It will be *especially blessed at that time* from the above consideration : and from this, probably, the words are introduced—"from henceforth."—It was always blessed to die in the Lord, but now especially.

VI. *The earth's harvest and vintage.*

The gathering in of the mystical fruits of the earth, or Roman world, is to be considered in its distinctive character as Anti-Christian. A consideration of the context induces us thus to decide, and to consider them as retributive judgments, and not as an harvest of mercy. Such an one is also given by the prophets (Joel. iii. 13.) The harvest may imply a *first* distinctive act—and the vintage a *second* distinctive process. The first has been thought to prefigure the burning of Rome, and the Roman earth : the second the destruction of the followers of the beast. The *ripeness*, literally the *dryness*, may betoken this act of burning.

The hand of Christ will be seen in this destruction. He is represented as appearing in a cloud, with a sickle. The golden crown which he wore intimates that he will be at that time a conquering warrior : and the earth was reaped. By the two angels, one with a sharp sickle, and the other giving command to him to reap, we are, perhaps, to understand two leading agents, or potentates—probably the two most Protestant nations of the earth, which may be used as instruments in perpetrating these judgments.

The vine to be gathered is called the *vine of the*



*earth.* It very probably directs us to the ecclesiastical body and church of Anti-Christ, including its chief secular supporters; just as the Jewish vine denotes the Jewish church (Isa. v.) Jehovah might have said to the Christian church as he did to the Jewish: "I planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: How then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me," (Jer. ii. 21.) "For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are full of gall, their clusters are bitter," (Deut. xxxii. 32.)

The angel who announces that the time to reap had come is said to have *power over the fire, i.e.,* the altar fire. He came from the altar. He resembles one of those Levites who had the fire of the altar, and its ashes in charge; thus there is an allusion to a sacrifice. The reaping was a sacrifice to divine justice, it being usual to represent judgments under the idea of a sacrifice: as the sacrifice of Christ, and the fire of wrath which seized him was our substitute for the fire of justice, which, in strict retribution, ought to have fallen upon us. Souls beneath the altar called for these judgments; and it is to be considered as caused by a neglect of the sacrifice of Christ, and its atoning efficacy.

We must briefly notice *the treading of the wine-press.* The extent of the space covered by the blood, was 1600 furlongs. This is about the breadth of the Holy Land from Dan to Beersheba. It seems to assure us that these judgments will fall upon the whole breadth of the land of the apostate spiritual Israel, or Anti-Christendom, and it is remarkable

that the states of the church, or the Papal dominion in Italy, from Rome to the Po, is exactly 1600 furlongs, or 200 miles. This will be the *scene* of the contests, and where the judgments will fall; and these the *subjects* of the infliction. It does not appear that thoroughly Protestant nations will partake of these plagues.

The judgments marked above are identically the same as those contained under the symbol of the battle of Armageddon: and the blood coming to the horses bridles seems to represent it as a heavy and severe infliction of wrath.

These are to be the scenes, according to one series of prefigurations, previous to the earth's entire evangelization. These figures bring us down to the millennium; and are the only events which have now to transpire previously. Another series of prefigurations (written within,) is the next portion to be considered, viz., the seventh vial, which we shall have to take up before we enter upon the prefiguration which symbolize the millennium.

Let us tune afresh the song of Moses and the Lamb, and faithfully adhere to the Gospel scheme, and its privileges, that we may escape all these judgments, and be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man.

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## DISCOURSE XIV.

THE SEVENTH VIAL—CORRUPTION OF THE AIR—CONVULSION  
IN CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTICAL POLITIES—WARS AND TUMULTS  
TRIPARTATE DIVISION OF THE EMPIRE—ERUPTIONS FROM THE  
NORTH—VISITATIONS OF BABYLON—LAMENTATIONS AND RE-  
JOICINGS AT HER FALL—TOTAL AND FINAL SUBJUGATION OF  
THE CONFEDERACY.

REV. xvi. 17-21; xvii.; xviii.; xix.—“And the seventh angel poured out 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 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, 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 mountains were not found. And there fell upon 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. And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, come hither; I will show 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 woen-

der, 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 woman sitteth. And there are seven kings; five 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, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. And the ten horns which 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 shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the 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 he saith unto me, the waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten 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 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 that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth. And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he 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 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 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 sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she 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 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: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the 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 thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth her merchandise any more: the merchandise 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 wood, and of brass, and iron and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, 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 fruits that thy soullusted 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, 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 clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches are come to nought. 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 of her burning, saying, what city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and 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, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. And a mighty 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 harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, 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 millstone 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; 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. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the 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 hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her 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, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, praise our God, all ye his servants, 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 many thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the 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 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 saints. And he saith unto me write, Blessed are 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. 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 wine press 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. 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 kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the 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. 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."

THE seventh vial extends to the end of chap. xix; and describes events of the most important nature. They are, in substance, the same events which have already been described in the last discourse. The former descriptions were written *without* the roll; and which, we remarked, were to be considered as consentaneous with this vial, which are written *within* the roll. The symbols which represent these events are varied; and some additional details are elicited. We are now to resume the subjects of the vials at this place.

While the unclean spirits are in action, and just before they withdraw from the scene, the seventh angel pours out the seventh vial.

This vial is not poured upon any *distinct locality*, but upon the *air, or atmosphere of the Apocalyptic world—the European political atmosphere, principally*: The air surrounds the globe: it will not, therefore, be of a local infliction, but universal. In this vial the judgment on Papal Rome is awfully depicted; but it would appear from the emblem of pouring it on the air, that it will extend to Romanism nearly, if not altogether, throughout the world.

Other circumstances follow as *voices, thunderings, lightnings, and earthquakes*, of an unequalled character, affecting both *sea*—maritime places—and *land*, causing the disruption of the city into *three parts*, attended with a *hail-storm*, and afterwards the *great judgment on Great Babylon*. These terms suggest some awful and powerful visitations.

#### I. *The action on the air.*

Is the *natural*, or the *moral* atmosphere intended? I would answer assuredly the *moral*; because the sense is to be the import of a figure. But we have more than once remarked, that there is always enough of the literal in the fulfilment of any prophecy to form a type, and in this case it is remarkable that we have seen, of late years, strange influences of distemper, both upon man and upon vegetable matter, which are utterly unaccountable. The air has had a spissitude quite unnatural: and diseases have appeared, the exact nature of which, and the right mode of the treatment of which, have



baffled all the healing art in the world. Probably cholera was occasioned by some electrical derangement of the natural atmosphere. And the same may be said of the disease on vegetable productions. But the principal part of the application of this symbol is the figurative fulfilment. This naturally suggests some extraordinary convulsion ; darkening, vitiating, and tainting the whole social, political and moral economy within the range of its influence, And probably this will occur in close connection with, and arising from the operations of the three spirits, and especially their act of gathering together the nations of the earth to the great battle of Armageddon, either *causing* that contest, or *proceeding* from it ; but more probably the latter, as it follows in a *subsequent vial*. Thus it would betoken some convulsions among nations, and some great struggles following that great conflict. We may, from this, conjecture that the first drops of this vial have begun to fall. In the literal manifestation of it we have distinctly observed this fact : and in its figurative application it may have entered upon its incipient commencement. Not that the sixth vial is run out, but that the latter part of the sixth, and the former part of the seventh are consentaneous, and are contemporaneous in their events, which is also the case with some of the seals and trumpets.

The effects of the disturbance of the atmosphere may be of a threefold character, just as in the natural atmosphere. There are to be affected—1. The region of storms—2. The *medium of vision*—3. The *principle of vitality*. All these may be disturbed natur-

ally, and also in the things symbolized. We shall further examine these points.

1. *Convulsions in empires and kingdoms*, by being violently torn and rent in pieces through civil commotions and foreign invasions. Thrones, dignities and systems may be whirled into confusion and destruction; and there are many indications of all this already appearing. The clouds are gathering, and all men are expecting a maelstrom, a whirlwind, or a tornado, to sweep with awful ravages in their course.

2. *The great lights, Kings, Princes, Rulers, are to be eclipsed or entirely extinguished.* And at this very hour many of them are trembling on their thrones. Already they feel that this vial is producing its impression on the political atmosphere. Every gust that blows stirs up an apprehension of the bursting of a storm; and that storm, ere long, will burst upon them and fill them with terror.

3. *The political and ecclesiastical constitutions, the principle of vitality to the political body, are to be subverted.* And here again we have striking examples. We see the disorganization of great political parties. Men of note, formerly at the head of parties, are set aside, and an unnatural mingling of social, political, and ecclesiastical parties, hinting further great changes. Truth will probably be distorted; errors of a monstrous kind be sanctioned; and schemes for the regeneration of mankind, not sanctioned by holy writ, as the ripe seed of that infidelity produced by the spirit out of the mouth of the dragon, already so plentifully sown, will probably be in vigorous

growth. The sequel will show that the disturbance of the atmosphere will produce these affects.

II. *Thunderings, lightenings, and voices.*

These arise out of the disturbance of the air. Such phenomena often occur in this book. Here they indicate the din of war and tumult following the perturbation of the political atmosphere. They are the natural consequents; and the very terms, as in all rational probability, suggest the power, the force and the awful character of these commotions. We have already the commencement of wars which fall under the sixth vial, and which may be the fruitful parents of those to succeed, out of which they may naturally grow. And there are indications, plainly perceptible, of the fierceness of the struggle.

III. *The great earthquake.*

This is another result of disturbed electrical action. The French revolution was mentioned under the denomination of an earthquake; and taking the same analogy, it will evidently denote a political convulsion under the seventh vial. But the one here foreshown will be such a revolution as will be perfectly unique—"such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great." Great as have been the political convulsions the world has witnessed already, we are warranted, from the terms employed, to say this will far exceed all former scenes of desolation and destruction. Our Lord's words will doubtless apply to these very circumstances, "for there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except

those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved : but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.)

IV. The *division of the city into three parts.*

The city is the *ecclesiastical system of Rome*—the Roman Anti-Christian commonwealth. Formerly there were *ten* divisions. A tenth part had fallen ; or England had been broken off, as we have shown in a previous discourse. We have formerly observed that in the course of incessant changes, there may have been generally ten kingdoms in the Anti-Christian state. But an event is now to transpire by which it will no longer retain the *decem-regal form* ; but will be divided into a *tripartite constitution*. Three great masses, clustered together by the union of power, consolidated by three separate interests, will be formed. In this form they will probably enter into the great combination, and carry on the great contest.

This division may be altogether *political* ; or it may be a division occasioned by some special views of some of the dogmas entertained by *Popery*, or in reference to the Pope's authority. Judging from present appearances, possibly this division may arise out of the late promulgation of the dogma respecting the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary.\*

Vitringa supposes a third part will adhere to the Papacy :—another third part, composed of those who are addicted to superstition, but not adherents of the Papacy :—and another third part will be on the side

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\* This last conjecture has been added since these discourses were first sketched and preached for good reason.

of the true Protestant church. This would convey the supposition of a combination of nations, still resolved to be Catholic: another combination of nations, holding superstitious tenets, such as the Greek and other eastern churches, which would be nearly in the same predicament as the first, with the exception of rejecting the Pope's authority, and a combination of Protestant nations, such as England, part of Switzerland, Holland, Prussia, Sweden, and some others.—Mr. Cunningham supposes a division of the nations according to the principles propagated by the three spirits, viz., Papists, Ritualists, and Anarchist Infidels. Dr. Cummings thinks it probable, that this three-fold division will consist of France, as the partizan of the Papacy: that Russia may lead the second part: and that England may be at the head of the third part. But some of these views do not entirely accord with the symbol. Russia, proper, is not a part of the Roman ecclesiastical empire; and England is divided from it. Without we take the type to be the empire of Constantine, Russia and England could not form divisions of the tri-partition. But it is probable that this type is a just one, but even then it would exclude Russia proper, notwithstanding she has a great deal of territory which falls under that type; and it may be supposed she will take a large share in some of the transactions of these times. Some (as Mr. Elliott, &c.,) think that France may be an instrument in the destruction of the Papacy, and may be at the head of a combination against it. Let this be as it may, whatever party that may be formed which will be the advo-

erate of liberty, will find powerful auxiliaries in almost the entire of Italy, Hungary, and in almost every Popish and despotic state.—Events have not yet cast sufficient light upon this three-fold division, to allow us scarcely to give an opinion, and we cannot say with any degree of probability how the different combinations will be formed, or of what they will consist. It will be according to principles now, or which may speedily be at work; and very probably those which have been infused through society by the three spirits will give a strong tincture to the whole. It is enough for us at present to know that there will be such a division, and to wait and watch the course of events as they occur, which will occasion it.

V. *The fall of the cities of the nations.*

As Rome is the great city, and signifies an ecclesiastical polity, so the *cities of the nations* must denote *ecclesiastical establishments* of the nations. And the fall of these cities indicates the fall of these establishments—the established churches of all nations, especially their worldly and political policy, emerge into view, and are doomed to dissolution. It is possible that all churches may be associated into one great fraternity, or brotherhood, working together with essential unity, although, perhaps, still under distinct regulations as communities. All will see eye to eye: Ephraim will not vex Judah; nor Judah Ephraim. Then each and all may heartily acquiesce in one church having a scriptural bishop, another a president, and another a moderator; and

all laying more stress on essential doctrines, than on circumstantial arrangements.

VI. *The great hailstorm.*

This hailstorm will produce great distress. The amazing weight of the stones, and the severity of the storm, will occasion men to blaspheme God.

A storm of hail is literally several times introduced into Scripture as a judgment. It was the seventh Egyptian plague, and one of the severest which fell upon them. A similar storm fell upon the Canaanites after Joshua's victory at Gibeon (Jos. x. 11.) Isaiah makes a prediction similar to this, as applicable to the destruction of Assyria, the great oppressive power of Israel. "And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering and tempest, and hailstones," (chap. xxx. 30.) Perhaps, about the time of the fulfilment of this prophecy, there may be some literal tempest. As there has generally been something of the literal under each symbol, as typical of the symbolic. Yet we are to look for the symbolic fulfilment of the prediction. On a former occasion, where the term "hail" was introduced, we noticed, that there is always in the revelations a local propriety in the emblems, and that "hail" directed us to the north, and to look for some judgment from the north, or from Russia as the only northern power that can inflict it. It is, therefore, probable that the *hailstorm* indicates some Russian eruption, and the dreadful devastation and misery

it will occasion. What these will actually be in detail we cannot now even conjecture; but the evils will fall upon the nations comprising the ecclesiastical empire. They may, or they may not arise out of the present troubles in the Turkish Empire. From the text, however, it would appear to be an event after the three-fold division, and the fall of the cities of the nations. And this would seem to shadow forth, that if Russia forms a part of one of these three-fold divisions, she will strike a heavy blow upon some one of the other two, most probably upon the supporters of the Papacy.

VII. *The visitation of Babylon.*

Then will Babylon fall: for when the cities fell then great Babylon came in remembrance before God, (chap. xvi. 19.) It might seem as if God had ceased to care for the Popish corruption and cruelties. But she will come in for her due share of consideration. This visitation is described in the three next chapters.

And, *first*, the Romish apostacy is *identified*. In a former discourse we have identified Anti-Christ, and have taken this chapter partially into consideration: but the identification there given was principally in reference to its political connections, and to its local territorial domain. Here we have some further particulars, and principally of a moral character, which could not then be included.

1. The *locality* where she was seen requires a little attention.

It is described as a desert place—a wilderness. The campaign of Rome is intended. In St. John's



day this campaign was a fertile and beautiful spot. Gibbon remarks, "the campaign about this time (the time the dragon gave his power to the beast,) was reduced to the state of a dreary wilderness; the land became barren, and the waters impure. The inundations of the Tiber rushed with irresistible force into the vallies of the seven hills, and bred pestilence and fever from the stagnation of the deluge. She can neither drain nor cultivate this desert, and it diminishes the population every year.

2. She is represented as *an unfaithful woman*—a gaudily dressed, drunken harlot, seated on a beast, dealing out wine—*i.e.*, pernicious doctrines, as a cup of salvation. She is thus represented in contradistinction to the true church, which is the Bride of the Lamb. Cities and nations are represented by the figure of a woman. Rome was, and England is thus represented. The idea of the church being thus represented is given by St. Paul. "For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2. Cor. xi. 2.) And the same figure occurs in many other places. Rome delighted in being called the mother and mistress of all churches. The church of Rome has been corrupted from her simplicity. Her fornication is her idolatry, the same as is represented of the Jewish church; and instead of being the mother of the churches, she is the *mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.*

3. She is represented as giving to the nations the *wine of the cup of her fornications.*

The Gospel truths are compared to pure wine,

and the doctrines of the apostacy to a pernicious mixture, called the wine of her fornications. She administers her pernicious doctrines as the cup of salvation. All her splendid ceremonies and deluding doctrines are calculated to fascinate the senses.

4. Her character is *dark and obliquitous*.

Part of her name, written on her forehead, is *mystery*. This very word the Pope had inscribed upon his tiara. The whole system is a mystery. St. Paul predicts it as "the mystery of iniquity." There is art, design, and treachery in all her movements.

5. Another inscription is *Babylon*.

Here a name is selected from the ancient monarchies which had some association with the people of God, as apostatizers from the truth, opponents, and persecutors of it. Egypt, Babylon, and Rome, are made applicable in this position. The name Babylon is given to this apostacy, because it was the most ancient scene of combination against God, after the flood. It was a wily, deceptive attempt to set aside God, to substitute second causes in his place, and to usurp power over men on pretensions of a religious nature.

6. She is represented as being *drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs*.

How strongly facts verify this description. It has been said that there have been ten times the number more slain by Papal Rome, than by Pagan Rome.

7. The *final cause of her destruction*.

The hatred and inflictions of the ten horns (Kings,

chap. xvii. 16.) This is to be considered in its entire and full sense, as a later act in her destruction. Other causes have been first at work according to several notices: and the kings of the earth are represented as lamenting her fate, (chap. xviii. 19.) So that the kings in one combination will destroy her; and those in another combination will bewail her. She will perhaps have recovered her strength after some of the former shocks, and be full of confidence and importance, when she will be finally destroyed by the ten kings, and consumed by fire, as also the former figure taught us.

VIII. *The Vision of another angel concerning the destruction of Babylon.*

There appear to be several successive announcements of the judgments concerning the destruction of this inveterate enemy of Christ. The chapter in which this notification is given (xviii.) appears, however, to take up the former notice, more in detail of the destruction by the ten kings, which was but briefly given in the preceding chapter. This declaration is made by a *mighty* angel, peculiarly distinguished, to show the decisive character of his communication. As in the last series of images, he proclaims, "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 bird." Then another angel warns the people of God to come out of her, lest they partake of her sins. This would show that the destruction was not yet entirely completed, but declared anticipatively. We see that even at this stage of her

existence there may be some good people connected with even Rome. Yet the people addressed may have been those recently enlightened and converted. This destruction will be *sudden, entire, and complete*, as noticed in the former series. And it is said it will be effected by fire. This affirmation is made two or three distinct times in the Apocalypse. Some think this is a symbol used to signify her destruction by the kings of the earth: others that she will be literally burnt with fire. It is said that Rome and the adjacent country is naturally adapted for consumption by fire. I do not exactly see what reason we have for interpreting this assertion literally any more than other statements, without something special in the context to suggest such an application. Perhaps the figure of dryness, in the other series, may denote this. We shall be constrained to leave the matter to events for explanation. If the figurative sense is to be taken, then the figure denotes utter and entire destruction, attended by circumstances of poignant suffering. She will be destroyed *without any possibility of recovery*. "A mighty angel took 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 it is said, "her smoke ascendeth up for ever and ever."

IX. *Reasons are assigned why she is to be destroyed.*

These are, 1. Her deceptions, as by enchantments and sorceries. 2. Her persecutions of the saints. 3. The enormity of her sins. They had

reached unto heaven. 4. Her selfishness. (ver. 7.) If ever there have been causes to move the Divine Being to punish mankind, here we have sufficient to induce the same procedure, for more pernicious and destructive evils never existed.

X. The *bitter lamentations* occasioned by her destruction.

These lamentations, made by *the kings of the earth*, *i.e.*, the Roman earth. We may suppose those kings to be some who did not concur with those who engaged in her destruction, for, it appears, the term the ten horns (chap. xvii. 16) signifies the civil authorities. Hence there may be some of these, and other kings who did not join in this act, and who will lament her fall. Her idolatrous practice has suited them; her indulgences and dispensations have tended to the promotion of their pleasures. The *merchants* of the earth; those who have trafficked in her wares, who have made gain by her acts of usurpation and grants. The *ship masters and sailors*, or those who have been employed in transmitting her articles of traffic, her proctors, officers, notaries, &c. These lamentations are sorrowful, grievous, and pungent; they are plaintive, pathetic, and moving.

XI. But while some are lamenting her fall, others are *rejoicing at the event*. And *holy apostles and prophets* are invited to join another note of praise. A great voice of *much people*, joined in the song of praise, saying, "Alleluia," &c. It is remarked that this is the first time that a Hebrew word occurs in the songs of praise in this book. Hitherto all the

terms, have been Greek. This circumstance furnishes the idea that those of Jewish origin, as well as those of Gentile, are to join in the triumph. Perhaps about this time there will be a great awakening among the Jews. Blindness has happened to the most part of the Jews, until the fullness of the Gentiles are brought in. But now, as the Gospel has spread over a great part of the Gentile world, many Jews appear to be coming forward to own their Redeemer, and to participate in his triumphs. The twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures, falling prostrate add their Amen, and give their responsive Alleluia.

XII. This is marked as the time of *the marriage of the Lamb, and the assumption of the regal power by our Lord Jesus Christ*. The bride hath made herself ready. By this we are to understand the conversion of a great part of mankind, and union with Christ, which is the occasion of great gladness. In such a state of things the church will be regulated according to the laws of Christ; and civil governments will be formed on the basis of Christianity. The nuptials are not announced as actually or immediately solemnized; but as being in close proximity of accomplishment, as though they were just about being celebrated.

XIII. To accelerate and complete the conversion of the world *Christ removes out of the way the remainder of his foes by extirpation*.

There is a grand scene depicted. St. John saw heaven opened, and he who was called Faithful and True, seated on a white horse. His eyes were as a

flame of fire, and many crowns on his head. He was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood. He was about to judge and to make war in righteousness. His name was the Word of God. He had some other name written, which none but himself knew. Also on his vesture and on his thigh he had a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. Thus arrayed he goes out to glorious warfare, with a sword going out of his mouth, and followed by all the armies of heaven on white horses, clothed in clean white linen. This is not the battle of Armageddon, but a subsequent conflict. Those who made an escape from the destruction of Rome, the Beast, or Pope, the false prophet, or clergy, gather together their forces, all the kings of the earth and their armies, who still adhere to them, and make war against Christ who had appeared on a white horse. I do not understand this of a literal and personal appearance of Jesus Christ, any more than under the seals. The horses and their riders were real and personal; but I am disposed to take the whole as of figurative import. As in the former mentioned instances they denoted agencies, so we may understand it here. Some eminent and special agencies, with a stated and avowed purpose to defend the cause of Christ, and with his special sanction and assistance. It is worthy of remark that Christ appears here principally in an atoning character, for his vestments were dipped in (atoning) blood, and he bears the name of the word of God: his sword proceeded out of his mouth. His appearance is not at all belligerent. It seems to intimate that it will be more a contest for the promul-

gation of truth and the communication of mercy, than for the infliction of judgment. Yet the figure of the angel standing in the sun, inviting the fowls to a feast on the flesh of kings, seems to imply that there will be a corporeal overthrow of the obstinately rebellious. As they gathered their armies together to fight and oppose Christ in his people, there will be some destruction of this kind.

But the struggle ends on the side of truth. The beast and the false prophet, are both cast alive into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone, and the remnant were slain with the sword of him which sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth. On the whole array of figures, we certainly have a sudden, signal, tremendous and total, destruction of Anti-Christ, and in anticipation of it we will join our Alleluia with those uttered in this chapter.

The providences of God may appear dark, mysterious and complicated; but they will be brought into the clear light of day. The truth of God may be despised, cast out, and downtrodden; but it will finally triumph. All the purposes of Christ will be accomplished; and the rebellious world will be brought into his fold, and into a state of blessed union with himself.





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## DISCOURSE XV.

### THE MILLENNIUM.—THE BINDING OF SATAN.—THE FIRST RESURRECTION—ITS SUBJECTS REIGNING WITH CHRIST.

REV. XX. 1-6.—“ And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and 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 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 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. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

THE things adverted to, in this portion of the Revelations, are entirely future. Nevertheless, they are of the utmost importance, and they are absolutely certain, for Christ is conveying in these terms information concerning the work he intends to accomplish among men. Yet in our investigations, we must proceed with that caution always demanded in the consideration of future things. In treating on things future, some persons have been too bold, amounting to rash temerity; positively deciding the plan of the future. And on the other hand some persons, sincerely desirous of ascertaining the mind of the spirit, have nevertheless failed in fixing upon

the true interpretation, principally from being biased by preconceived notions, and partly from the want of an analogical interpretation of the images and symbols employed. I approach the subject with much diffidence. I shall doubtless be judged to have failed also, by all who embrace views different from those I shall advance : but should I really miss of ascertaining the truth, it will not be because of preconceived notions, or from blindly adhering to any favorite system, or author ; having adopted my views from a close and patient consideration of the text, and in doing so, I have dropped some notions I had previously entertained, acquired in the usual cursory mode of reading. I beg your candid forbearance, and prayerful examination of what may clash with your own ideas on the questions.

Although we must patiently wait for events to entirely explain this, and other unfulfilled parts of this prophecy, yet from the increased light which recent events have cast on the subject, and from the improvements in the science of biblical criticism, which have rendered some things formerly obscure, now more intelligible, we may surely form a more accurate judgment than could have been done formerly.

Whatever may be the diversified views taken on the subject of this chapter, in some of its details, yet it is generally believed that its main feature is the prediction of that time spoken of by the other prophets, in so many places, when all men shall know the Lord—when righteousness shall cover the earth—and when there shall be a development of

Christ's entire redeeming purposes, to establish a *real Christian dispensation*. To this period prophecy has ever directed the church, and to this object the church has ever looked with intense anxiety. At this period, the reign of the beast will have ceased; the prophesying of the witnesses in sack-cloth will have terminated, and the persecuted woman will emerge out of the wilderness. Righteousness and peace will spring out of the ground, and the happiest state of things possible to imagine will exist.

This period has been generally denominated *the millennium*. But the term itself is not used in Scripture: it is simply taken from the idea of its duration, which is several times employed in this chapter.

Amongst the ancients there were the most absurd notions entertained concerning the nature of this state. All the sensualities of a heathen Elysium, or of a Mohammedan paradise, were fondly expected to be realized. Amongst the moderns, minds have varied from a scene of spiritual prosperity, to an entire renewal, and absolute change of even the material system of the earth itself, and a political sway and authority over its inhabitants.

To carry along with us an intelligible view of the subject, we ought to connect it with the events which immediately proceed it. It follows in succession to the seventh trumpet, without a single intervening event, except that which is preparatory. And when the seventh trumpet shall have sounded the mystery of God shall be completed. We have noticed the total and final destruction of Papal Rome, and have seen that the beast and false pro-

phet were cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Here we learn that the old serpent, the devil, and Satan himself will be bound, and cast in also; and then will this glorious period commence.

Let us distinctly notice,

I. *The preliminary action.*

The *binding of Satan* is preparatory to the millennium. Although this is the only event prior to the millennium, after the destruction of Anti-Christ, yet the event does not immediately follow; it is supposed there will be several intervening years, between these two events, because the full chronological period will not have run out. This is supposed by some to be the period between the 1290 years, and 1335 years (Dan. xii. 11, 12,) or 45 years—a space of time between one event and another in the consummation of the purposes of God respecting the establishment of the kingdom of Christ; to the latter of those is attached a peculiar blessedness; or that it is the commencement of the blessed period of the millennium.

Now we may suppose that this time will be spent in the *active propagation of the Gospel*. Probably the binding of Satan will take place at the commencement of this 45 years; and instead of placing that event in close approximation to the first resurrection, if we place it in connexion with the destruction of Anti-Christ, it will leave a wide space for that work. Then we should be prepared to expect an extremely rapid progress of Christianity, for there would be no opposing spiritual influence. Then, also, the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit

will be realized. These things, together with the facts of the recent judgments on the Anti-Christian power, and the remarkable interpositions of providence, and associated with these things the long previous abundant supply of the Holy Scriptures, and the previous wide spread evangelical labors of his servants, will warrant us to expect the conversion of the greater part of mankind in that time. And all these will form the main subjects of his millennial reign. This state of things will be a preparation for the commencement of this grand event.

Satan will be seized by an angel, who will descend from heaven, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and for the period of 1000 years he will have no power to deceive the nations.

Are we to consider this description as figurative or literal? This is a book of symbols, and, without some special reason, all the representations are to be taken as symbolical. I think this binding is *a literal one*, and for the following reason. A real personage is adverted to under a real name, and his identity is particularly marked as the dragon—old serpent—the devil, and Satan. This personage is described in other parts of Scripture as going about in prosecuting his work of destruction. And it is this very prowling lion who is to be arrested and confined, so that his operations are to close at the time specified. Thus, then, there is not only a reference to him personally, and by name, but to his work literally considered. It would not materially affect the reality of the thing if we were to consider the description as figurative, for a binding figura-

tively understood, signifies restraint, and if he is restrained he is kept from his purpose of ruining mankind.

## II. *The first resurrection.*

After the world is converted, and all are righteous, ready for the special sway and direct control of Christ, then the first resurrection will take place.

1. What is the *government* of Christ here alluded to? It is said thrones were given them, and they lived and reigned with Christ 1000 years. These are the same souls which cried from beneath the altar, "how long, Lord, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth," who were commanded to wait until their entire number was completed. Now the oppressing system itself is destroyed, and the time is come when they are to meet with their peculiar reward.

The great point of controversy is, does the Saviour's Advent precede the millennium, or is his Advent to succeed it?

The pre-millennial literalists make this portion of prophecy the basis of their system of *the personal reign of Christ on earth* during the millennium, and of the reign of the saints with him: to which may be added, to fill up the outline of their theory, the change of the living saints, who, with the just raised from the dead, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air; and that the earth will then be renovated by fire; as, also, that Christ will fix his throne at Jerusalem, and that the saints under him will administer the government, the Jews having the most prominent position. These are the views of this

class of interpreters founded on this text. But the pre-millennial Advent of Christ is not at all established from this place. This theory is but confounding the matter, as described with Christ's coming after the millennium to judgment. Then undoubtedly the entire remainder of the just will rise—the rest of the dead which are not to live until the thousand years are past, will then live; the living saints will then be changed, and they all then will meet the Lord in the air. This theory is formed more from imagination, than from careful deliberate views of Scripture.

There is no mention here of a scene of this kind. There is nothing said of the appearance of Christ; he is not brought on the scene, which he certainly would have been, if this system had been a correct one, at such a very material point of his destination. It is simply said, "they shall reign with him, *i.e.*, where he reigns, but that is not said to be on earth. The words are sometimes quoted, *ad captandum*, "they shall live and reign with him on the earth 1000 years," and they have obtained such currency, as to become almost the established verbiage. But the words "on the earth," are not in the text at all. It is said (chap. v. 10.) "And we also shall reign on the earth;" but that was spoken by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, on the occasion of the introduction of the whole scheme of discovery, in anticipation, we presume, of its final results; and after the formation of the new heavens and earth, it is said his servants "shall reign for ever and ever." And after the same



event, it is said, "A great voice out of heaven (proclaimed) behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." (xxii. 5; xxi. 6.) But, we must make a due discrimination as to the distinct periods alluded to. Nothing of this kind is said before the existence of the new heavens and new earth, and all this is distinctly marked as what is to occur afterwards. It is, therefore, clear that Christ's appearing is not noticed as pre-millennial.

Then what distinct ideas are we to entertain of their living and reigning with Christ 1000 years prior to the resurrection of the "rest of the dead?" I will answer this by a statement brief and general. I believe they will reign with him in heaven, body and soul, for 1000 years after they have been raised from the dead. That these risen saints should mix with human saints yet in the flesh, would involve the idea that they are to be again in a state of probation, for some living in the millennium will actually be seduced and destroyed. This will come out more at large in our subsequent examination of the subject. I state my views with considerable diffidence, as I have never met with any thing similar in any other writings.

And further, as to the scheme of the *pre-millennialists*. Do we find a prediction of two conflagrations, and two renovations of the earth in the sense the literalists state? One is described as occurring after the millennium, and if there is to be one previous to it, (as stated indeed without any authority

from what is written,) then there would be two. It is said when Christ shall really come, from his face the heavens and the earth shall flee away. But the literalists represent the earth as continuing, notwithstanding his coming, and Christ as fixing his throne upon it. And what would become of the bodies of those left in the grave during that conflagration. Would the substance of their corporiety be moulded up in the new organization of the earth?

What advantage could there accrue from Christ's presence in his humanity during this period? His humanity is not ubiquitous. He could only be seen by a few immediately near to him, and those living at remote places could either never have a sight of him at all, or else must make a long pilgrimage to catch a casual glance of him. But if we conceive of a powerful, vivid, spiritual manifestation, and his direct influence in the government of the world, in the midst of the various congregated associations of his people, in all parts of the earth; then all would reap the benefit, and be alike sharers of the glory. It is then admitted, that whether we take his personal, or spiritual presence, *the government will be Messianic*: and the saints, whether in heaven or in earth, will participate in it.

There is in Scripture, frequent and clear mention made of Christ's Second Advent and personal reign; but it will be *post-millennial*, as appears to be implied in the connection of every passage announcing it. He will come personally after the millenium to raise the rest of the dead, and to judge mankind.

*of the Christian martyrs and saints*—the national restoration and conversion of the Jews, to begin with the destruction of Babylon. Popery and Mohammedanism having passed away, and Satan bound, the church will flourish universally 1000 years.

Even those who reject the notion of Christ's personal reign divide on the nature of this first resurrection. One part adopt the idea of Whitby, and consider it as the resurrection of the principles, &c., of the martyrs; and another part take it as literal.

The opinion of Augustine, that of a general spiritual resurrection, from the time of Christ's resurrection, and that of Grotius of an ecclesiastical resurrection, I do not consider as worthy of any particular notice. I shall confine myself to the consideration of the question. Is this resurrection of martyrs to be regarded as figurative, or spiritual, or is it a literal resurrection? I adopt the latter position. It seems a little anomalous to contend for a *spiritual* reign, and a *literal* resurrection; but I have often said that the whole of this book is symbolical except there are plain reasons from the passage itself to judge otherwise, and I think we shall discover sufficient reason for deviating from the usual spiritual interpretation in this particular. I proceed to a few observations to establish the position I have taken.

Some terms in this book are *expository*, as the seven candlesticks, the meaning of which was symbolical; and it is said, "the seven candlesticks are the seven churches," which is a literal explanation of the figurative sense. And here it is said they lived again, and by way of exposition it is added,

Christ's finding iniquity at his coming is no argument against a previous millennium ; for Satan will have been loosed, and will have gone on the face of the earth, and will have deceived many.

We draw this conclusion from the previous considerations, that Christ will not reign in his personal bodily presence, but will hold a spiritual sway, that all things will be conducted on spiritual Gospel principles, and that the state of human society will be so regulated as to promote the utmost good of all and each.

2. Our next inquiry must be, into the *nature* of the first resurrection. Will it be figurative or literal ?

There have been various solutions of this question. The early fathers taught a *literal* resurrection after the destruction of Babylon, and then the personal reign of Christ ; and following the commencement of his reign the conversion of Jews and Gentiles. Augustine and his followers taught a *spiritual* resurrection of the soul to succeed Christ's *first* coming. Grotius, Hammond, and those of their school, explain it as an *ecclesiastical* resuscitation, which they supposed commenced at the time of Constantine. Paganism was considered then as dead, and Christianity as then raised up to life ; and that this continued to the fourteenth century, when the Othman Turks took their rise as Gog and Magog. The destruction of these errors, they believe, will be followed by the literal resurrection and judgment. Another theory is that introduced by Whitby, and adopted by Vitranga and Faber, viz., a *resurrection of the principles, doctrines, spirit, and character*

“this is the first resurrection.” Therefore, by the same example these terms are literal, and consequently this resurrection does not symbolize any thing else.

No doubt the term resurrection, and its cognates, are often used figuratively to denote a revival natural, official, or spiritual, as in Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones; and in this book of the beast’s, and the witnesses’ living again; and again of the prodigal son being alive again. But the resurrection ought to be of corresponding character with the death, as the revival from national exhaustion to national organization and vigor,—the resurrection of the witnesses was from figurative death to figurative life. The father of the prodigal son did not think that his son had been actually dead, but dead to him; and now he was alive again in the same sense.

Of what nature then is the death referred to in the present case? Unquestionably it is individual natural death. They had been *beheaded*. Consequently it must be a corporal resurrection that is intended to be asserted. Believers, in the New Testament are spiritually dead, and have experienced a spiritual resurrection. The martyrs had been slain corporeally, and are to have a real resurrection. They are not made the symbol of a spiritual resurrection, but *those* who had been beheaded, were identically to live again, and to reign with Christ 1000 years. It must have been a figurative death, if the resurrection was to have been figurative; for how can the revival of a spirit or disposition follow as a sequence to a description of a natural death.

No one doubts but the *second* resurrection will be literal; but the *first* and *second* resurrection are spoken of in the same terms, as including the resurrection of *all men*—as *one grand drama in two acts*; of a part of mankind in one act, and of the rest in the other act. *And if the first is but symbolical, then the second would be so also.* And this is just the error some in the primitive church fell into, and against which the Apostle introduces his masterly arguments. It follows from this that the *literal* theory of the first resurrection is the only true one.

The *rest* of the dead are to be raised at the *second* resurrection. Then are the martyrs never to be raised at all? for they are not included in the second or general resurrection, only the *remainder*. All the resurrection spoken of, in which they will participate, is the first resurrection. But we shall be disposed to think, that because they were martyrs, and faithful to Jesus, they will not be doomed forever to drop a part of their nature, and never share in that redeeming work of Jesus,—so emphatically spoken of—the restoration of the body; but shall be ready to conclude, that as they are not to be included in the second resurrection, *the first resurrection, which includes only themselves, will be a literal one.*

3rd. Who will be the *subjects* of the first resurrection? It is commonly affirmed by Premillenarians that *all the just* will rise at the first resurrection. But this view is not sustained from the text. St. John specifically asserts it will consist of those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and of those who would have

been put to death rather than deny Jesus. They had been solicited to acknowledge the beast, and to receive his mark, and were in danger of death if they refused: but they did refuse, notwithstanding the threatened danger, yet by some means escaped. In short, the subjects of this distinction will be *actual martyrs*, and those possessed of the *spirit of martyrs*, and who in intention were such. If it should be alleged, none of the truly pious worship the beast, or receive his mark, we only make the apostle to trifle; for it is evident he is describing a special case. We have already given the idea that the subjects of the first resurrection will reign with Christ in heaven. That is as a reward for their faithfulness, in laying down their lives a short time before it would otherwise have been the case, they should be glorified in body and soul, 1000 years before the rest of the people of God. This we wish to be distinctly understood as the opinion we entertain on this subject.

The *propriety of this arrangement* with the whole economy of grace will appear by a little reflection. Out of every dispensation God has raised to heaven a sample of that entire salvation he intends to accomplish through Christ. Thus, in the Patriarchal dispensation, Enoch was taken to heaven in body and soul. In the Mosaical, Elijah was thus favored. And at the commencement of the Christian dispensation there were several who were similarly treated. We are informed that when Christ died, several graves were opened, and the bodies of several saints were disintered; and at his resurrection they were

quicken'd, and went into the city, where they were known by many. Now for what were those dead saints made to live? Was it to live again on earth as probationers, with all the possibility of losing their souls, which had once been safely landed in heaven; and after some time spent on earth in this position then to die again, and to have another resurrection to life, or misery, as the case might be? This would have been unseemly: better to have remained dead. When made alive again, doubtless they were intended to live on, and were taken to endless glory. Thus, from the Christian dispensation, there were several samples of entire salvation in body and soul admitted into heaven. The period of this millennium may be considered as the full establishment of the Christian dispensation; it will be the richest display of the Holy Spirit's energy; and in the sense we have adopted on the subject under consideration, we have again numerous holy persons who will be admitted into heaven in body and soul, as witnesses of the entire salvation of God. It is possible they will be taken to heaven in a visible and glorious manner, so as to make a deep and lasting impression on all beholders.

### III. *The nature of the millennium state.*

From some occasional notices contained in the word of God we may gather some information of the state of things, as they will exist during the millennium. We shall endeavour to abstain from every thing fanciful, but proceed on the principles



of sound induction, from data furnished by the sacred records.

1st. *Christ will have universal sway.*

If we consider the glowing descriptions of prophecy, we cannot but admit there is to be, in the church's future, such a state of prosperity as the world has never before seen. It would be impossible, in the limited space that can here be allotted to this subject, to give a full length portrait, or even scarcely a fair outline of the extent and prosperity of Christ's kingdom. A few plain and express passages will, however, give us the idea. Then it will have been said, in point of *fact*, "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever,"—"for thou shalt inherit *all nations*." (Ps. lxxxii. 8.) The second Psalm is a very remarkable one; there it is declared that Christ should reign as king over all the earth, notwithstanding the combinations and rage of opponents. And in another Psalm (lxxii. 8-11,) it is stated "he shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea all kings shall fall before him: all nations shall serve him." Daniel shows that a kingdom should be set up which shall never be destroyed, but which shall subdue all others—that should destroy the image representing the great monarchies, and should

become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. And Zechariah, influenced by the same spirit, says, "The Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one." (xiv. 9.) Thus shall "the earth be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," yea all shall know him from the least to the greatest; and all kindreds and families shall be blessed in Christ. The Jews shall cast off their long and blighting opposition; all Anti-Christian usurpation, both Mohammedan and Popish, shall be dispersed, and all the devotees of false gods shall make mention of the name of the Lord, and acknowledge him as the one Lord.

Besides the universality of the reign of Christ, there are many other expressions used by the prophets respecting the state of things at this time, which give a foreshadowing of great blessings. How far they are to be literally taken is a matter of controversy. We shall, however, notice some of the most prominent.

2nd. *The amelioration of the physical condition of the earth, its vegetable and animal productions.*

We shall be deficient in space to enter upon any lengthy consideration of such a subject as the one here introduced. A few sentences must suffice. Making all allowances for the figurative quality of prophetic language, yet probably, to some extent, the earth will be renovated. Climates may be moderated: briars and thorns, and the noxious and poisonous nature of various plants, may be removed. Marshes, &c., may have their distinctive character

changed, and be rendered fruitful. "The wilderness and the solitary places shall be glad for them, the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." "Thou shalt sow the ground: he shall give bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be full and plenteous: in that day thy cattle shall feed in large pastures, and shall eat clean provender." (Isa. xxx. 23, 24.) We found this idea upon the answering of God's full design in redemption by Christ, as evinced in the accomplishments of these things as effects of his redemption. It will be the destruction of so much of the effects of sin. Sin has ruined the world physically, and we can have no scruple in admitting the amelioration of the evils. On the same principle there may possibly be a modification in the ferocity of animals; they did not possess a savage nature before man's fall, and they may, to a great extent, cease to possess it. Whether the words of the prophet (Isa. xi. 6; lxxv. 25,) are to be taken as symbolical or not, yet, on the principle named, such a change may be realized.

3rd. *The physical condition of man may be rectified.* Sickness, pain and sorrow, may vanish, and death may be restrained. These are the effects of sin.

A question has been raised, will there be death during the millennium? And although we cannot answer this question, yet we may reverently say, perhaps not generally: so generally may it be abolished, as to be spoken of universally. Men, in general, will probably live to the end of the millennium. This would be the restoration of man's life

to the period enjoyed by the ancient patriarchs. Thus it is expressed by Isaiah (lxv. 20-22.) "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. For as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." The oaks of Bashan are said to live 1000 years: 500 in coming to perfection, and 500 in decaying: and the days of God's people are to be as their days. Satan, during this period, being bound, men will not be tempted, and, therefore, during this time not fully on probation. It appears to be the will of God that all rational creatures should pass through a state of probation. Hence, after this period, men will be put to the test by the loosing of Satan; and, therefore, it appears as though men in general will live to endure this test. But it is consistent with God's purposes to take some infants to heaven on the score of Christ's merits, without their either personally accepting or rejecting salvation. So during this period, God, for special reasons, may remove some to heaven before they have undergone this test: and in respect to their salvation may deal with them as he does with infants. He that dies at 100 years old, without this temptation, will be admitted to heaven, as children now are. The words quoted might be rendered, "he that dies an hundred years old shall die a child: and the sinner that dies an hundred years old shall be accursed:" (shall be deemed accursed, or cut off by God because he

has sinned.) Thus it appears that a sinner, in those days will not be permitted to life. If death occurs it will be on some special account.

4. *The mental and intellectual condition of man may be improved.*

Our mental capacity depends, in a great measure, on our physical state. And if our physical constitution is much improved, our mental capacity will share in the effects. Every impediment of a physical nature will be removed; and then also the judgment will be clearer and stronger: our capacities from these and other causes may be all enlarged. Knowledge of science and physics, abstract truths, and Scriptural truths, together with all kinds of knowledge, may be much enlarged. And this will tend to increase man's comfort and happiness.

5. *The moral and religious condition of man will be exalted.*

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. My people shall be all righteous. He will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations. Justice, righteousness, peace, and holiness, shall prevail (Zech. xiv. 5, 20.) .

The question has been asked, will men commit sin in the millennium? We may answer this question by saying that men, in general, will be made holy, and will, in general, remain so holy, as that holiness may be affirmed of them universally. Men will live in that state, in a high degree, which we call entire sanctification, or evangelical perfection. They will love God with all the heart, mind, strength, and soul. The new covenant will be fully

established and adhered to. If the heart be filled with love, and there be no tempter, then there will be universal and perfect holiness. Then the period so long prayed for will have come. "Thy kingdom come: thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord." Holiness to the Lord will be inscribed upon the most common things.

Yet, doubtless, it will be possible to commit sin. Many may be cut off, as we have noticed, during the range of those years, for having sinned, and many of those very persons, who will have lived so long in this glorious state, will be seduced into sin when Satan is loosed.

6. *Universal brotherhood will prevail.*

Perfect love—the love of our neighbor as ourselves, will imply all this. Increase in knowledge and capacity, in conjunction with perfect love, will do away with errors and divisions in doctrine, in a great degree; and remove the animosities of different classes of men. National animosities and wars will cease. There have been many Utopian schemes to introduce a universal social state, but then the time will have come when it will be positively established. For a short time after the outpouring of the spirit, in the commencement of Christianity, the church enjoyed a type of this state, but now the whole of mankind will reap the entire fruition.

7. *An universal language has been suggested by some as likely to be used by the entire world.*

The universal brotherhood would seem to require it. Perhaps in the Antedeluvian world all men were of one language. We read of a confusion of language because of a sinful combination; and when all such dispositions and acts cease, may it not be the case that one language will prevail. Diversity of languages may have produced some good effects: but it has had much inconvenience, and it has only, at best, been a good brought out of evil. It produces much confusion in worship, where the worshippers are of diverse speech. "I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent," (Zeph. iii. 9.) It is a curious fact that some eminent scholars and philanthropists have turned their attention to the comparison and analysis of languages, so as to endeavor to form a universal alphabet. But he who gave the Apostles power to speak languages of which they knew nothing before, could easily inspire each one of the multitudes with a new language. But what language is likely to be adopted. The Hebrew was probably spoken in Paradise, and down to the time of the confusion of speech; and it may be the language again universally in use. The Saxon-English, of England and America, will be the principal instrument used in the conversion of the world, and it is possible this language may prevail.

We have already given some chronological notes of the approaching time of this period, and we need

not repeat what we have said on this subject. We have expressed our opinion that the seventh vial has probably commenced its effusions ; and soon, perhaps, we shall have more copious emissions of its contents.

As to the *duration* of the Millennium. It is *six times* mentioned as 1000 years. But the question arises, are these literal years, or are they to be understood on the year day system, or 360,000,000? They are usually taken as literal years, and with strong probability. A day is put for a year, but a year is never put for 360 years. The term year in every instance simply stands for a literal year. If we take the idea of chiliads, it seems to confirm this view. The period of the world's existence has been considered as prefigured by the week of the creation ; and to signify so many thousands of years : 6000 years of its existence are supposed to be occupied in the turmoil of the world ; and 1000 *as its sabbatic rest*. If in this case we take the 6000 as ordinary years, then we must also similarly take the 1000 as denoting the period rest.

What a happy termination of the contests of Christianity ! Long had the world groaned under the corruptions of Christianity, and endured the miseries arising from it. But now the jubilee is come, and all heaven and earth is jubilant. Let us pray and labor for this consummation ; and let us live in a spirit answering to the character of this glorious time.



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## DISCOURSE XVI.

**EVENTS SUBSEQUENT TO THE MILLENNIUM—THE LOOSING OF SATAN  
—THE SEDUCTION OF GOG AND MAGOG—FRUITLESS ATTACK  
ON THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS—THE GENERAL RESURRECTION,  
JUDGMENT AND CONFLAGRATION—THE NEW HEAVENS AND  
NEW EARTH—THE DESCENT OF THE NEW JERUSALEM—CON-  
CLUSION.**

REV. xx. 7-15; xxi; xxii.—“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters 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 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 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. And I saw a great white throne, and him that 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 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 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 hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed 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 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 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 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 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 life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things ; and and I will be his God, and he shall be my 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. 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 show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God : and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal : And had a 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 north three gates ; on the south three gates ; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 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. 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 the wall of it was of jasper : and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations 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 sardonyx ; the sixth, sardius ; the seventh, chrysolite ; the eighth, beryl ; the ninth, a topaz ; the tenth, a chrysoprasus ; the eleventh, a jacinth ; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates 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 therein : for the Lord God Almighty and the 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 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 honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day : for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour 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. And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of 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 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 servants shall serve him ; And they shall see his face ; and his name shall be in their foreheads. 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. And he said unto me, these sayings are faithful and true : and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly : blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, see thou do it not ; for I am thy fellow servant, 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 the sayings of the prophecy of this book ; for the time is at hand. He that is unjust let him 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 reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine 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 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. For I testify unto every man that heareth the word 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 : 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 book. He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly ; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

THE things, upon the consideration of which we now enter, are subsequent to the millennium, and will be the closing scenes in this mundane system. Many startling events have been revealed, and the grand drama closes with scenes which, from their importance and deep interest, are sufficient to absorb every thought.

Mr. Elliott, (with whom Dr. Cummings strictly coincides,) thinks the 21st chapter was written without the roll, and contains matter supplemental to the description of the millennium, and parallel with it; being a recapitulation for the purpose of a fuller detail. Consequently, that the new heaven and earth there described, is but a fuller description of the millennial state. But obviously there is no evidence of the correctness of this statement. There is no index, either in the main narrative, or the alleged supplement, to indicate that it ought to be thus considered; for we do not discover any parallel connecting lines. On the other hand there is evidence to the contrary; for the particulars are essentially different. In the subsequent matter there is a notice of the dead, small, and great standing before God, to receive their final destiny. How could this comport with the idea of the millennium, or of any thing transpiring just previously? The Pre-millennialists do indeed speak of a judgment then begun, and to be concluded at the close of this state, but no one unbiased by a system could entertain such a notion. It does not at all suit the idea of congregated worlds assembled for investigation in each other's presence: of one grand drama, concluded by a great decision, pronounced in the hearing of all. At the *completion of the thousand years* there is the loosing of Satan, the seduction and rebellion of multitudes, their destruction; and *then* the general judgment, to which the second resurrection is a prelude. The passing away of the first heaven and earth follows; and a reproduction of them as the

new heaven and earth succeeds. The *conflagration* is considered as the reduction of all matter to its original elements, and how could this take place before the millennium, without supposing that there is but *one* resurrection, or that *all men* will rise, when, to the contrary, it is distinctly said, "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished :” for if there should be a conflagration at the commencement, and a reduction of all matter to its original elements, how would the bodies of men be preserved for re-appearance in the scene. There is to be no more sea in the new earth, and how could the sea give up its dead. In the new earth, righteousness dwells exclusively, and there will be no more plagues, and no more death, (chap. xxi. 4.) None of these things can be predicated, absolutely, of the millennium state. There is, therefore, sufficient evidence against the supplemental character of this account, and *for its being a description of a continuous course of events.*

I. *The losing of Satan and his seduction of multitudes.*

The happy days of the church, upon the idea of which the mind loves to linger, will have their termination. The thousand years, with all their important and happy events, will roll away ; and a period will be put to this blissful and exalted state of the church of Christ. Satan will be released from his imprisonment for "a little season." And then he will show himself in character--he will engage all his energies in opposition to the holiness and happiness of man ; and to the rightful sway of Christ. As we

have remarked in the last discourse, God will deem it proper and necessary that the principles and devotedness of the inhabitants of the world should be tested ; and will, therefore, allow Satan to be at large for this purpose. He will be but too successful : the number of those he will deceive will be "as the sand of the sea." How strange that it will be possible to persuade such a number of those happy people to rebel against God ! And yet, again considered, what wonder ! He deceived our first parents when enjoying the intimacy and vision of God in paradise.

But it appears that while his efforts and partial success will be general, yet he will be most successful, in some particular quarters, and over a people of a peculiar character. These are termed *Gog and Magog*. These people are described as living in the *four quarters* of the earth ; or, at the *four angles, or corners* of the earth. But who are these people ? In a former discourse we have remarked that anciently these were general names applied to the barbarous nations of the north of Europe and Asia. In the revelations the names occur as distinctive of the inhabitants of a country, for their locality is given. They may have a symbolical meaning, but it is mostly the case that where there is a geographical identification, the sense is literal. Many interpreters understand the names as symbolical expressions for *the heathen nations* of Asia, especially the Scythians. Gog is mentioned (Ezekiel xxxix.) as the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and both of these sons of Japheth were seated in the north eastern

angle of Asia Minor. Ezekiel mentions Gog, as coming from the north, and falling on the mountains of Israel, whose attack should be unsuccessful. Joel (iii. 1,) and Zechariah, (xii. 2,) also in mentioning an ungodly confederation against Israel (perhaps the symbolic Israel intended, or the true church of God) says God will send a fire upon Magog. All these literal allusions may possibly have a figurative fulfilment. No doubt they refer to *Pre-millennium* times; and to an Anti-Christian confederacy against the mystical Israel, about the time of the destruction of the mystical Babylon, and of the conversion of the Jews: or the same as previously described as the battle of Armageddon. The events we are now considering are *Post-Millennium*, yet the same terms seem to be used as a description of this last combination and contest; and the prophets may have had in their minds both the antecedent and the subsequent applications of the figures, and St. John may here apply their descriptions to these remote events.

Possibly any ungodly confederacy of the last enemies of the Christian church might answer the terms, and may prove to be true in the fulfilment; but, yet they are so literally referred to in the very localities where the people who answer to their names dwell, as to leave it probable that the last enemies of Christianity will commence their movement from that quarter. .

We cannot conceive the idea of any nations *continuing idolatrous* during this glorious period. All the nations of the earth are so fully spoken of as being



converted, that we cannot, admitting the truth of these statements, admit such a supposition. And we believe they will *remain* in this happy state through the millennium. They will be such as will be deceived by Satan. And the temptations and delusions of this arch adversary are sufficient to account for the fact of the great defection mentioned by the Apostle. It will be a confederacy of fallen Christians, whose minds have been filled with evil by the grand adversary, and who will combine together to oppose themselves against Christ, his government and his church. They will be persuaded by Satan that something is wrong, and then spiritual things will not suit their tastes.

II. *The attempt on the camp of the saints.*

The church in its different organizations and positions is most probably meant by the camp of the saints. It is thus called, evidently in allusion to the camp of the ancient Israelites, in their journeyings through the wilderness. Their object will doubtless be to take the sovereignty out of the hands of Christ and his ministers, who will act as his agents in the administration of affairs. It will be a rebellion against his authority: but will very likely be ostensibly directed against the agents. And perhaps there may be some leading Diotrefes, as a human agent for Satan, who will wish to have the pre-eminence, who under him may stir up numerous others. And taking the Antediluvian inhabitants of the world, and the dwellers on the plains of Shinar as parallels, we may conclude the probability that these wretched beings will be

tinged with infidelity, and will probably be guilty of setting up some one as the rival of God. Moses and Aaron acted for God, by his immediate delegation; but those who were dissatisfied at the state of things murmured against the ministers. They said to Moses, why hast thou brought us out of Egypt, when they all knew that God alone accomplished it; and that he alone could have done it. Their sin is therefore declared to have been against God. Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church, yet Christ said "why persecutest thou ME." Thus it is in all ages. The agents are always struck at, but evidently the act has a higher destiny. And in this case, the opposition will probably be directed against the agents of Christ. The argument most likely will be, ye take too much upon yourselves; ye are lordly and dominant; ye oppress the people who are as holy as yourselves. They went up on the *breadth of the earth*. They will widely and diffusively attack the church. Most likely means will be adopted to effect a wide spread agitation. The madness of such an attempt is truly astonishing. To think of opposition when there were such evident tokens of the Divine presence and glory. But we have a previous instance of a rebellion of Israel, even at the foot of mount Sinai, where God had given signal displays of his power and glory.

What kind of a contest this will be, whether literal and physical, or a wicked and captious contradiction and contravention of the peaceable endurance of God's people, would be hard now to say. But this we may say, *the attempt will be fruitless*. God

will interfere in behalf of the saints, and will consume their opponents by his judgments. Thus perished Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their company; and thus God's displeasure has often since that time been exercised on wicked combinations formed to disturb the peace and prosperity of the church. The devil, the author of this apostacy, will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.

III. *The little season, or the duration of this contest.*

It has been regarded by some as a matter of supreme surprisc, that Satan during this "little season" could effect such a great rebellion against God. They do not see where there is any space of time for bringing about such great purposes; for, if Satan is to be bound 1000 years, and at the close of the millennium, the final catastrophe is to terminate, there is absolutely, they think, no space left for carrying out this delusion. To meet this difficulty, it is computed by some that the world will want *seven years* of being *seven thousand years old*, and that this will be the little space left to Satan to exercise his ensnaring art—a kind of interlude after the millennium itself. This might be feasible if we could place a well grounded reliance on our chronology. A better solution, I think, than this will be to refer back to the remarks made in the last discourse. There we observed the probability of Satan's bondage, immediately after the destruction of the beast, and the false prophet, or forty-five years before the millennium actually begins. And if this actually were to be the case, then he must be

released forty-five years previous to the termination of the millennium ; and this would form the " little season." And although a short space compared with the period of this bondage, yet it would allow sufficient time to effect all his purposes, and to accomplish the work attributed to him.

#### IV. *The termination of the Messianic covenant.*

At the time of Satan's defeat *the mediatorial system ends.*

" Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father ; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.—And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the SON also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." (1. Cor. xv. 24, 28.) When, at the close of the millennium, Christ will have raised the bodies of men from the grave, and thus will have become not only our "wisdom, righteousness and sanctification," but also our "redemption," then, as mediator, he will have performed his whole work for man ; and will then vacate the mediatorial throne. All things will be subdued to him, all enemies put under his feet, even the last enemy, death ; and then will he, as it were, resign his commission into the hands of his Father ; and, as Son, resume the position which he held from all eternity as it respects his relation to the Trinity ; and then God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will be *all, entire, in all things and places*, without the intervention of a medium. By raising all mankind from the dead,

and calling them to judgment, he closes the millenium. *Judgment* succeeds.

The *general resurrection* is placed in its exact order, as immediately *at the close* of Christ's mediatorial reign, and immediately *preceding* the general judgment. All that are in their graves, of every age, rank and degree, will hear the voice of the Son of God, and will come forth; the earth and sea will give up the dead bodies; and hades will give up the souls, and the dead small and great will stand before God, the Son, as judge; waiting to receive their final doom. The books will be opened, to reveal all human transactions. What a history! such a one as is not contained elsewhere. And the book of life will be opened also, recording the transactions of persons entering into covenant with God through Christ, and thus having stood in a state of acceptance: but for this no flesh could have been saved.

When Christ will first make his appearance to judge mankind, what a sensation, so to speak, will be felt by the earth and the heavens—they flee away, as affrighted at his presence, and will be wholly dissolved, a fire being kindled, as by scintillations from his divine glory, and the elements will melt with the fervent heat. In respect to their present state they will be no more; but a new order of existence will be substituted in their stead.

V. *The production of the new heavens and the new earth.*

The earth, and all things in it, and around it, will be dissolved; that is, there will be a decomposition

of its materials into their original elements. It is not said that the matter of which they are composed is to be *annihilated*, but *dissolved*. The Psalmist, by divine inspiration, had said, (Ps. cii. 26.) "They shall perish," and Jesus Christ refers to it as a thing well known, "heaven and earth shall pass away." (Matt. xxiv. 35.) The elements which have been dissolved, or decomposed, will have a new combination bestowed upon them, and will be subjected to a remodification. The new heavens and new earth may not be any thing like the present ones, although precisely the same elements may be employed in their composition. By new combinations of the existing elements with each other, they may assume new properties, and new forms and appearances. We may find an illustration of the above by an examination of select portions of matter. By a little varied combination we may produce an entirely different body, possessing entirely different properties. Thus air and water are composed of nearly the same elements. Different proportions of oxygen may severally form acids, oxides of various degrees and qualities, also many other bodies, according to the base into union with which it enters. Now what an infinite variety of appearances are capable of being produced by varied combinations of the existing elements; and a world entirely dissimilar from the present one may be organized by the Holy Spirit in his action upon the separated elements. The various forms may present striking aspects; the colors may be blended so as to present enchanting effects. All this may produce sensations and emo-

tions of an entirely different kind to our present ones, so as to cause the highest pleasure and delight : and the appearances things may present, by the device of infinite wisdom, may be such as to exhibit many grand emblems and representations of the covenant of grace, and of the love and provisions of Jesus, by which heavenly possessions were purchased, so as to fill the soul with holy rapturous love. This latter idea is suggested by two distinct portions of the New Testament. Our Lord says, (Jno. xiv. 1-3.) "Be not troubled at my departure out of this world, for we shall not be separated ; there are many mansions in my Father's house, many places suited to the various attainments and qualities of my people. I go before, to *prepare* a place for you, to *adapt* and *fit up* your future residence." And the Apostle (Heb. ix. 23,) asserts, "it was necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with the blood of the sacrifices ; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." By the virtue of his sacrifice he *alters* and *adapts* heaven, to render it *suitable* to a blood bought people. And from all this we should infer that the future abode of the redeemed will be exactly adapted, by some special circumstances and arrangements, to their state and condition, and that the whole will be suited to fill them with the most exalted rapture.

In addition to their different form and appearance, there will be undoubtedly the absence of every thing which now renders the earth and its atmosphere inconvenient and hurtful. These things are the effects of sin, and cannot there exist. The

atmosphere will no longer be the vehicle of noxious vapors, storms, and tempests, scattering fevers, and other raging diseases. The seasons will be so tempered and modified, as to be all utility and nothing abhorrent. The earth will no longer present shapeless, unsightly and horrifying aspects, or be cursed with barren deserts and morasses. Desolating earthquakes and flaming volcanoes will no longer threaten to swallow up, or consume the quiet resident. Sin, sorrow, pain, and death will be banished this transcendent paradise. There will be no more sea; but as in the old paradise, there may be beautiful, pure, and translucent meandering rivers and streams, to variegate the scenery, and to invigorate its productions.

And more than all, Jesus will dwell among them; and the happy inhabitants will be blessed with the perpetual vision of God. They will have a fair prospect into the holiest—they will see him that sitteth upon the throne. They will know God in a manner they cannot know him here: and enjoy him in a supereminent degree, far surpassing present experience, or present conceptions. Christ will be the mirror to reflect the glory of God, and the medium through which we shall discover it. Show us the Father, said Phillip, and we will be satisfied and delighted. Thou hast seen me, said Christ, and he who has had right conceptions of my character, has seen the Father in me. We discover, says the Apostle, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Thus we all, even in this life, as with open face, behold as in a glass



the glory of the Lord ; but in a far superior manner in the life to come. So heavenly, exalted, and glorified will man become, that angels, as of old, will gladly mingle with him, and become his companion and fellow worshipper.

They will have bodies adapted to this place of existence : no longer animal, but spiritual and glorious. Bodies freed from all defects and impediments—equal to the angels ; minds also equally improved and enlarged, so as to be enchanted with the most enravishing ideas, which every thing, and every circumstance will pour upon them.

The new heavens and new earth mentioned by Isaiah, (chap. lxxv. 17,) is a blessed state of things, but it is not that state which is intended here. Isaiah refers to times when men will be very holy and happy ; will live long ; and will have every comfort and felicity. But it is a state in which they will build houses, and inhabit them ; and plant vineyards, and eat of the fruit of them ; when there will be births and deaths ; and when sinners will yet live as probationers. This cannot apply to the earth after the judgment. It is most probable that Isaiah's description belongs to the full development of the Gospel system, or in other words to the millennial state.

But the new heavens and earth mentioned by St. John are those which will be called into existence after the judgment. There through all eternity he will display his love in redemption. "That in *the ages to come* he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 7.)

Let it not be thought that this is unduly materializing the abode of man in his future felicity. There must be some locality assigned as the abode of finite creatures ; and some material position which they must occupy. This present earth, purified, refined,

newly organized, and vastly beautified, is plainly referred to in scripture as that abode. "The meek shall inherit the earth."

"Meeken my soul thou heavenly Lamb,  
That I in the new earth may claim  
My hundred-fold reward."

And what more can be said of any locality called heaven, than is said of this as an eternal abode of redeemed man. It will as far exceed in glory the first paradise as the second Adam exceeds the first. It will blaze with the refulgence of the Divine glory. It will be embellished with every beauty. The throne of God and the Lamb will be fixed upon it, and the Tabernacle of God will be with man. Christ will dwell among his people. In short it will be—*Heaven*.

Oh, ye blood bought race, ye grovelling sinners, ye sordid sons of earth! Behold what God intends for you if ye will but seek it! Will you not spontaneously cry,

"Gladly the toys of earth we leave,  
Wealth, pleasure, fame, for this alone."

And true it is,

"He builds too low who builds beneath the skies."

The vision of the *new Jerusalem* is next introduced. It is doubtless so denominated because Jerusalem was the metropolis of the ancient church, and the seat of their church polity, and principal worship. St. John saw this holy city coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

There have been different opinions formed as to what is intended by the new Jerusalem. Augustine thought it signified the glorified state. Whitby and Vitringa thought the millennium earthly blessedness of the church was intended. Mr. Elliott and others take the same view. Faber seems to suppose that the re-establishment and modification of the

Old Testament Jerusalem belongs to the millennium state, and the descent of the new Jerusalem belongs to the glorified state. One part of the meaning of this passage may be, that those saints who were in the separate state of existence, admitted, as elsewhere related, to a place in happiness, preparatory to their final adjustment in the climes of bliss, will now have their locality changed to the glorious abode which Christ has fitted up for the residence of his people.

Jerusalem was the place where God was worshipped, and where he manifested his glory. I am inclined to think this description, in its full sense, signifies, if the expression may be warranted, *the ecclesiastical system of the heavenly state*. The tabernacle of God will be with men, where he will dwell, and there directly and gloriously manifest himself to the occupiers of the new earth: and that it will be continually accessible to all the blessed: that they will have free access to the throne to worship, adore, and praise. There will be no temple there: The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will be the temple of the new Jerusalem. Temples are those places where that glory dwells, the walls of which limit it within their boundary: but this will be glory without a temple. There will be nothing to limit it from shining throughout the earth; and to fill with resplendent light every part of it, so as to need neither sun nor moon, for the creator of light himself will be there immediately shining with refulgent rays, and will have no need to employ his creatures for that purpose.

Then we have a sublime description of the splendor, glory, purity and happiness of this heavenly Jerusalem. John was shown this mystical organization as the Bride, the Lamb's wife, that is, the holy church of God as then existing. The splendid images employed as to dimensions, material, &c., must be understood allegorically. We may take

them as intimating the utmost perfection of order, symmetry, beauty, and splendour, which will exist in this heavenly state, (chap. xxi. 10-21.) There will also be the water of life, and the tree of life, with perpetual fruits: there will be no curse, and no night. It will be the perfection of all the covenants of God, and of all his grace to man. Abraham looked for a city, and it is said God prepared for the patriarchs a city. That is, their hopes were eternal, and stretched forward to this consummation. This is alike the hope of all the pious. Look for—desire this city, and purify yourselves as he is pure.

These sayings are *faithful and true*; and God has taken care to verify them to men through the medium and experience of his servants.

Chapter xxii. from verse 6, is an *epilogue*. The Divine Revelator is himself introduced as speaking in his own person to add his own imprimatur to the authenticity of the book.

But the unholy have no place in this happy residence. Those whose names are omitted from the Lamb's book of life will have a far different abode: one of blackness and darkness, of torture and misery, of fire and brimstone. Oh! get washed in the blood of Christ. Keep thyself pure. You are invited to partake of these blessings. The Divine Being does not dismiss the subject until he has given you the most solemn, hearty, and free invitation imaginable. "The 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 of the water of life freely." (chap. xxii. 17.)

A blessing is pronounced on those who hear, and read the words of this prophecy. This is introduced both at the beginning, and at the conclusion, showing the importance of doing so. God commends the study of this book to us. Who then shall say let it alone? I felt I could not refrain from attempting, in the best manner I was able, to explain and

apply the contents of this marvellous revelation. I cannot but think it is a sin for any minister of the Gospel to say he knows nothing about it. "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophecy?" (Amos. iii. 8.)

THE CONCLUSION.

I have now gone through this astonishing book, and have endeavored to open up its important contents. We have together admired the benevolence of God in granting this revelation: we have gazed on the fearfulness of his judgments as he has in succession uttered them. We have seen the wickedness of men in opposing his plans. And we have rapturously acknowledged the admirable success which will attend all his administrations. "For thine, O Lord, is the kingdom, the power, and the glory; for ever and ever, Amen." In the explanation of this sacred treasure, I have stated nothing at random; but have examined every point with care and deliberation. Perhaps every several treatise on this book casts additional light on some points. With some degree of diffidence, I may say, that in several and various particulars, I have come to conclusions which develope the meaning further than it has ever been done previously, at least, as far as I am aware. I think I have more clearly elucidated some points, and have corrected some things which I have accounted errors in former expositors. A close examination and comparison of this attempt with former expositors will clearly substantiate, I trust, that it has not been made in vain. May the Triune Deity—Father, Son, and Spirit—give his special blessing. Amen.

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