

# THE REVELATION:

HOW IS IT TO BE INTERPRETED?

BY

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"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear, the words of this prophecy,  
and keep those things which are written therein : for the time is at hand."—

REV. I. S.

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## PREFACE.

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THIS little Treatise is intended principally for the candid, prayerful consideration of those Christians, who, discerning and mourning over the divided condition of the Church of God, have sought to find a common ground for the union of all saints. With remarkable unanimity these Christians have, almost without exception, adopted some form or other of the Futurist hypothesis of prophetic interpretation. The writer would, very respectfully and lovingly, solicit from those honoured brethren who are able to form an independent judgment, a reconsideration of that hypothesis; and, in particular, he ventures to ask that the reasons which he has here endeavoured to lay before them may be weighed as in the sight of God. Any *erroneous* conclusions, whether held by him or them, and backed by whatever weight of authority, or generality of acceptance, must be but “wood, hay, stubble,” to be burned up in the Day of Christ; and this is a very solemn thought for any one who takes the responsibility of guiding others in Divine things. The writer is tremblingly conscious how possible it is that, after all, his reasonings may be unsound; though he deems it due to his brethren to declare that he has not pursued this investigation, without earnest, repeated, importunate

prayer to the Father of lights, for the unction of the Holy One ; nor without a very jealous self-examination, lest prepossession and prejudice should hinder that holy unction. His cry is still, May the Lord direct both writer and readers !

This little Tract on the Revelation is not an exposition of the prophecy ; nor is it an application of the comforting, sustaining, and searching truths contained in it : it is simply an attempt to answer an anterior question, "On what principle is it to be understood ?" Of necessity it is largely controversial ; and thus the author has had occasion to mention by name certain esteemed brethren, and to array himself in a position of antagonism to them. Published opinions may be discussed without any disrespect to persons : the writer desires to do no more than he is willing they should do with regard to him : but since he knows something of the treachery of his own heart, and how lenient its judgment of its own evil, he would explicitly beg to assure the dear brethren whose writings he has had occasion to criticise, that he entertains a sincere esteem and love for their persons, and that he would be truly sorry if a single word that he has written should needlessly grieve them. And thus he leaves the momentous question, committing it to those who walk in the sight of God.

TORQUAY, *June*, 1866.

# THE REVELATION.

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It is a wondrous exhibition of the love of God our Father, that He has condescended to make us partakers of his counsels. Our Lord Jesus says, "I have called you *friends*; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." And the Revelation of Jesus God gave unto Him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. The Prophecies of the New Testament, then, are in a very special manner the gifts to the Church of the Father's love through the Son.

But, unhappily, we are not able to use the gifts; we cannot read the communications; we differ, as widely as the poles, in our judgment of what they mean. After nearly eighteen hundred years' study of these Divine predictions, the great majority of believers appear to have come to the conclusion that they have *no* meaning worth caring about; while the minority, who are persuaded that they have a pregnant meaning, can so little agree what it is, that one is tempted to use, concerning students of prophecy, the old proverb, "*Quot homines, tot sententiæ!*"

Surely this is our shame, and ought to be our sorrow. Instead of each promulgating his own *ipse dixit*, and fiercely beating down all dissentients, or pouring upon them his contemptuous sarcasms, we ought all to be crying to God for help in this tremendous difficulty,

confessing each his own liability to mistake, ready to examine and re-examine the basis of his own conclusions, and sincerely willing to weigh, without prejudice, those of other devout students of the Sacred Word. As long as we pit<sup>d</sup> our systems of interpretation one against another, building up elaborate details, while we quietly *assume* the stability of our respective foundations, we shall remain gladiators over opinions, while "the testimony of Jesus" becomes, through our endless contentions, the very laughing-stock of the world.

### I. THE SCHOOLS.

It may not be an unacceptable or an unprofitable service to attempt, looking to the guidance of God the Holy Ghost, a re-examination of the points where our rival interpretations *begin to diverge*. Taking the Apocalypse as the great treasury of prophetic truth given to the Church, we find its interpreters ranging themselves into three grand schools or divisions, holding, respectively, these three principles:—

I. That its predictions range from the apostolic era to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; or, at latest, to the fall of Pagan Rome.

II. That its predictions range over the whole period between the apostolic era and the close of the millennium, or later.

III. That the strictly predictive part is as yet wholly future, reaching from the close of the present age to the close of the millennium, or later.

These three schools of interpretation, which may be conveniently distinguished as the Preterist, the Pre-

sentist, and the Futurist,\* include all who assign to the imagery and scenery of the Apocalypse a fixed and definite sense, in persons and events. Of these, I dismiss the first or Preterist scheme, as having few, if any adherents in this country now, and as being hardly worthy of refutation. The second and third, however, are widely taught; and each embraces thousands of the saints of God, who, however widely they differ in interpretation of details, agree in this, that they are looking, yea, longing, for that blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This hope is a most precious bond of union, and of itself ought to draw us towards one another in love, and not to repel us from one another in contempt. We bow to the authority of God; we receive the prophetic word with gratitude; we search it with reverence and expectation, as "what the Spirit saith unto the churches"; we know that it is "faithful and true"; and, above all, we know, and rejoice to know, that the grand end, on any scheme of exegesis, is the destruction of every work of the devil, the full glory of our Lord Jesus, and our eternal enthronement with Him. With so much in common, well may we lovingly bear with one another, and, hand in hand, seek for fuller fellowship in the light. May He who dwelleth in light, smile on this attempt to find some sure canons or fundamental principles of interpretation.

## II. THE TWOFOLD ASPECT OF THE CHURCH.

The following sentiment is held by some as a

\* These terms convey no opprobrium, but are merely distinctive; adopted for convenience of reference, to avoid circumlocution.

canon: "The Church, being heavenly in its origin, calling, and associations, cannot be the subject of predictions whose sphere is earth. But the main scenes of the Revelation (chaps. vi.—xviii.) are laid on earth; therefore the 'saints' mentioned in them cannot be the Church, but are probably Jews after the Church is with the Lord." It seems a sufficient reply to this, that, though the Church is heavenly, she has, for the present, earthly relations, such as those of natural kindred, of obedience to powers, of testimony, of persecution, of satanic operations within her (producing worldly conformity, heresies, false doctrine, etc.); and that in these aspects she may most aptly be the subject of prophecy, whose sphere is earth.\* But some of these relations are prominent in the Apocalypse, and may well be those of the Church. There are, moreover, many prophecies of which the Church is the undoubted subject, as Matt. xxiv. 5—13; Luke xxi. 8—21; John xiv. 16—26; xv. 18—xvi. 33; Acts xx. 29, 30; 1 Tim. iv. 1—3; 2 Tim. iii. 1—5; 12, 13; iv. 3, 4; 2 Pet. ii. 1—22; Rev. ii. 10. And, though these prophecies do not vie with those of the Revelation for importance or extent, the question is not how important a prediction the Church can be the subject of while on earth, but whether she can be of any.

The anonymous author of "Remarks on the Study of

\* Mr. J. N. Darby, one of the earliest promulgators of modern Futurist views, and a copious writer on the heavenly calling of the Church, observes: "The Church dispensation *on earth*, taking, as to time, the place of the broken-off Jewish branches [is] therefore in many respects, connected in dates."—"Notes on the Revelation." p. 15, *note*.



the Revelation," (Yapp, London,) presses the character and standing of the Church against Presentists with unusual vehemence. Though the tract is on the whole marked by a loving spirit, as well as by learning, logical clearness, and a comparative absence of that dogmatic assertion which too commonly usurps, in such Futurist works as I have met with, the place of argument, some of its statements are, I venture to suggest, more severe than truth warrants. The esteemed writer lays much stress on "the peculiar calling of the Church as the body commenced by the descent and in-dwelling of the Holy Ghost." He affirms that "none of the Protestant school of interpreters have an adequate idea of the new and heavenly work which God began at Pentecost, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. . . . All Protestant interpreters, if they admit a personal advent at all to introduce the millennial reign, present, as the hope of the Church, that which is, in fact, the proper expectation of the converted Jewish remnant; viz., the day of the Lord, the Son of man, seen by all the tribes of the earth, coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Whether this very serious charge of "ignorance of the truth of the Church," of "dishonouring the Spirit," and, in effect, of "disfiguring or denying the person and work of Him of whom the Spirit is the vicar," \* really lies against all Presentists, I will leave to the decision of Him, "whose eyes are as a flame of fire." The truth alluded to,—the peculiar calling of the Church, a body confined to the present dispensation, I have myself known and taught,

\* "Remarks," pp. 23-25.

through grace, for more than twenty years; but it is not clear how it determines the sense of the Revelation.\* This must surely be sought only by a patient and careful induction of many truths. We may fully accept the heavenly standing of the Church, and cherish her peculiar hope to be gathered unto Jesus in the air, *before his manifestation*, and yet see that in the Revelation God is acting on behalf of Christ in providential government, with distinct relation to the Church through this dispensation. But these subjects will presently come before us for more definite examination.

### III. GIVEN TO THE CHURCH.

The preface of the book declares the purpose for which God gave to Jesus this unveiling: "To show unto *his servants* things which must shortly come to pass." As the time was long after the Roman desolation of Jerusalem,† there were, in no sense, servants of God existing, to whom this could apply, but the Church. "And He sent and signified ‡ it by his angel unto *his*

\* It may be as well to observe, that one may hold the Presentist interpretation of the Revelation, without, in the least degree, believing the union of the Church with the State, and her wielding of political power, to be according to the mind of God. Nay, I will go farther; it is possible to believe, that such a condition of things, as a fact to take place, (for it *did* take place) was prefigured in certain symbols of this book, without at all involving God's approbation of it.

† I think I may assume the Domitianic date of the book as settled.

‡ The verb *σημαίνω* strictly means "to make known by signs or symbols," an important fact to bear in mind in the exegesis of this book. See John xii. 33; xviii. 32; xxi. 19; in all of which a sort of symbol is given. In Acts xi. 28 there may have been such a sense; in Acts xxv. 27 it is, however, certainly excluded.

*servant* John;” himself an apostle of the Church, who had been familiar with this application of the word (*servant*) in the mouth of the Lord Himself, and in the writings of the other apostles, Paul in particular. The word is used, too, for the Church in Thyatira (ii. 20); as also for the glorified inhabitants of the heavenly city (xxii. 3). Moreover, after the whole symbolic imagery of the book has passed, the angel, looking back upon it, says, “The Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto *his servants* the things which must shortly be done” (xxii. 6):—an important word, since it proves that the whole of the book, and not a part only, was intended for the interest and information of the Church.

Again, the whole book is distinctly given to the seven Churches,—a symbolic figuration, surely, of the whole existing Church. For John addresses the book to them before even the candlesticks are mentioned (i. 4); every one of the seven epistles is supplemented by a counsel to him that hath an ear, to hear what the Spirit saith *unto the Churches*; while, as if to guard us against the supposition that this included only what is written in chapters ii. and iii., the Lord Jesus Himself, after the whole Revelation is unfolded, adds those most weighty words, which, beginning with the command, “*Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand,*”—close with the appropriative reminder, “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify UNTO YOU these things *in the Churches*” (xxii. 10—16); a pregnant statement, which to my mind goes far to determine the interpretation of the whole book.

And does it not seem incomparably more consistent with all we know of the relation of Jesus to the Church, that He should give her some information concerning her own long and dreary wilderness journey, than that He should narrate to her the fortunes of a body of Jews not yet in existence, nor to be until her earthly course was run, and she was with the Lord? Would it not be strange that a book should be communicated for such an express purpose (i. 1), commended to us with so solemn a sanction (i. 3; xxii. 7), yet in whose twenty-two chapters we can find only seven, and parts of two others, in which *we* have any part at all? If the scenery and imagery of the book are almost exclusively devoted to a Jewish remnant, how strange that when the great oppressor is destroyed (xix. 20), not a word is said of Israel's happiness and earthly glory! The heavenly glory of the Church is what instantly follows, and goes on to the end without an allusion to Israel distinctively.\*

It is true that Israelitish names, both of persons and things, occur profusely throughout the book; but this is only because the symbolic system which the Divine Author has selected is Israelitish—or, more correctly, I think, Old Testament,—in its structure. To infer that Jewish persons are meant in every case in which a Jewish symbolisation appears, would be certainly a mistake. How confidently is it asserted that the body of sealed

\* In the allusions in chapter xx., which are indubitably to scenes on earth, there is absolutely nothing from which we should infer even the existence of Israel during the millennium, did we not get it from the Old Testament.

servants in vii. 1—8 must be literally an Israelitish company, because they are designated by the names of the twelve tribes! Now if this be a true principle of interpretation, it must be equally applicable throughout. But is there no Old Testament imagery in parts confessedly limited to the Church? Look at the number seven, the candlesticks of gold, the “Son of man”, his priestly attire, his attributes of the “Ancient of days”; look at the allusions and symbols in the epistles to the Churches (Churches from among *Gentiles*, be it remembered), as the paradise of God, the false claims of some to be Jews, the synagogue of Satan, the doctrine of Balaam, idols and fornication, the manna, Jezebel, a prophetess, power over τὰ ἔθνη, the book of life, the key of David, to open and shut, a pillar in the temple, the city of God, its very name, “Jerusalem.” Every one of these expressions is an allusion to the ancient dispensation, or to things contained in its Holy Writings; but it would be extravagant, and in some cases even absurd, to suppose that things, actually and literally Jewish, were meant by these allusions in letters addressed to Gentile Churches. Again, the Holy City itself and its accompaniments are cast in a thoroughly Jewish mould. It is the “tabernacle of God”; its gates are inscribed with “the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel;” it is measured with a reed (see Ezek. xl. 3; Zech. ii. 1, 2); its foundations and gates are precious stones and pearls (see Isa. liv. 11, 12); the kings and the nations walk in the light of it, and bring their glory to it (see Isa. lx. 3—5). Yet she, of whom these things are spoken, has no Jewish

character ; the city is the Bride, the Lamb's wife ; in which there is neither Jew nor Greek. Thus we find Jewish symbols profusely used for matters where the actual Jewish character is indubitably excluded. If, then, we dare not conclude that the seven Churches of Asia were bodies of Jewish faith and standing because Jewish allusions are used concerning them,—if we hesitate to say that the New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb, is a Jewish remnant, merely because the names of the twelve tribes are written on her gates,—with what consistency can we infer that the sealed company in vii. 1—8 are Jewish, for exactly the same reason ?

An argument for the fulfilment of the Revelation in dispensational continuance rather than in a terminal crisis, may be founded on the commands as to sealing given respectively to Daniel and John. While all the prophecies committed to Daniel were destined to a progressive fulfilment from the very time of their publication, there were some which, having their main action projected to a very remote era, were, *on this express ground*, commanded to be shut up and sealed (Dan. viii. 26 ; xii. 4, 9). On the other hand, John was commanded (Rev. xxii. 10) *not* to seal his prophecy, expressly because “the time was at hand”. And this nearness must surely be *comparative* nearness, else why the difference of prescribed treatment ? But if both were to be fulfilled only in the end of this age, there was not so very notable a difference between the remoteness of the one and of the other,—Daniel's predictions being about 2,400 years, John's above 1,800, beforehand.

But the main things spoken of by each,—the doings of the terrible Little Horn, the Wilful King, and the Wild Beast,—were, on the *historical hypothesis*, eleven centuries off when Daniel prophesied, but less than four from John.

#### IV. THE THINGS WHICH ARE.

The Lord Jesus Himself has authoritatively divided the Revelation into three parts: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." The things "hereafter" \* commence with chap. iv.; so that if we could certainly define and limit the application of the "things which are", our whole question would be settled. Many Futurist interpreters assign to the epistles of chaps. ii. and iii. a prophetic character; and explain them as descriptive of successive stages of the Church of this dispensation, reaching from the apostle's day to the Lord's appearing and our gathering unto Him. Of course, those who maintain this, do *ipso facto* give up the ground that there is anything in the calling or standing of the Church which would prevent her from being properly the subject of continuous prophecy while on earth; yet as, however inconsistently, the two dogmas are held *pari passu*, it is needful to examine them separately. For some time I did myself believe that

\* Some knowledge of Greek has been thrown away in carefully changing this word to "after these things." But a little knowledge of English would have shown that "hereafter" is a perfect equivalent to the phrase. Hereby = by this; herein = in this; hereto = to this; hereat = at this; hereabout = about this; hereafter = after this.

the Seven Churches had this prophetic bearing.\* I do not now deny that there may be such a meaning wrapped up, as it were mystically or typically, in their several conditions. But the more I examine them, the less am I satisfied that such is their main application; in other words, the less likely does it seem that the events of the dispensation, especially the grand apostasy, the blasphemous assumption of supremacy by the Pope of Rome, and his tyrannous wearing out of the saints, which are, beyond all doubt, the most notable events of the Church's earthly history during the last eighteen hundred years, should be delineated for her warning, only in the slight and obscure manner in which they are supposed to be summed up in the denunciation of Jezebel (ii. 20).

But to look more exactly at this appropriation: the Church at Thyatira is spoken of in highly laudatory language, praised for her works, and love, and service, and faith, and patience, and, again, works; the last more abundant than the first; while the allowance of Jezebel is the *only* thing condemned, and that reproved by the Lord in terms by no means so severe as He uses elsewhere (compare the tenderness of ii. 24, with ii. 16, and iii. 3), while strongly condemnatory of Jezebel herself and her associates in sin. Now, is this the manner in which we should expect the professing Church to be addressed from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries of our era? Was the Church then peculiarly

\* I know not where to point to a fuller, abler, or more elaborate exposition of this hypothesis than is given in "The Javelin of Phinehas," by my valued friend, the Rev. William Lincoln, of Walworth.



full of love, and faith, and service, and patience, and blamable only for *suffering* (!) the Papacy to carry on its whoredoms and idolatries? Nay, according to Matt. xiii., it was the Church itself that put the leaven into the meal, until *the whole* was leavened. In short, we must admit one of two things: either the Lord, in the epistle to Thyatira, is addressing his own faithful few, or the Church at large. If the former, they might surely reply that the rise and tyranny of the blasphemous Papacy was what they could in no wise help; that they did testify against it, and were slain for their testimony.\* If the latter, they were the very guilty party, earthly, sensual, devilish; the willing slaves of Satan, readily doing his work. In neither case is the epistle at all suitable to the middle ages.

If now we examine the following address, that to Sardis, which is appropriated to the era which opened with the Reformation, what do we find? A tone of reproof incomparably more severe than that of the preceding; with not a single subject of approving notice, not a note of praise, except to a few isolated individuals, who stand in marked relief to the age. So

\* Mr. Trotter, in a correspondence with Mr. Elliott (*London Monthly Review*, June, 1857), labours hard to rebut the objection that Jezebel is the exception, and the high state of piety the rule, of Thyatira. But he takes no notice of the words, "Thou sufferest" (Rev. ii. 20), though these words form the point on which the whole blame of the Church turns. The Church is highly praised by Jesus; but she is blamed for one thing,—she *suffered* the woman Jezebel. I do not think that Mr. Trotter's defence has at all made good the protracted application of the Seven Epistles; and thus the charge brought against Futurism, of an abrupt and most improbable plunge from apostolic times into the far distant future, remains in unabated force.

that, on this interpretation, the Papal ages, from the 5th to the 15th century, were viewed by the Lord with complacent tenderness on the whole, though presenting some exceptions which He threatened if they did not repent ; but the Protestant ages, from the 16th to the end of the 18th century, were looked upon by Him with a frowning displeasure, though presenting a few exceptions whom He cheered with promises. Can this be possible? Does not our common conscience revolt against such a verdict? Grant to the full the imperfectness of the Reformation ; grant the secular, earthly, world-loving character of the Protestant Churches generally ; grant everything that can be said in depreciation ; yet was it actually a worse age, very, very much darker, than that of the unchecked Papacy? Did the Lord find little or nothing to approve in the protest of the Reformers in Germany, in England, in Scotland, in Holland, in Switzerland ; nothing in the bringing into prominence of the grand doctrine of justification by faith alone ; nothing in the translation of his own Word into the vernacular tongues, and its wide and rapid dissemination among the peoples ; nothing in the divinity of the Puritans in England, in the stand of the Covenanters in Scotland, in the testimony of the Huguenots in France ; nothing in the evangelistic work of George Whitefield and the two Wesleys, filling the land with gospel light, and love, and holiness? Is it possible that the Lord could find nothing to praise in the aspect of his Church in these centuries ; nothing, except that a few names had not defiled their garments? Then, did He look with loving complacency on the

*preceding* ages, seeing nothing in the haughty assumption of supreme power; nothing in the claim of God-like infallibility; nothing in the gradual usurpation of every glory of Christ; nothing in the darkening of all his doctrines; nothing in the shutting up of his Word; nothing in the gross idolatry; nothing in the host of false mediators; nothing in the morality more hateful than that of Paganism; nothing in the blood of saints poured out like water in the Alpine valleys; nothing in the demon-tortures of the Inquisition; nothing, absolutely nothing, in all this, inconsistent with praise for works, and love, and service, and faith, and patience, and works? Is it possible that He should only mark here certain evil persons, who ought not to have been tolerated, while the majority, "the rest in Thyatira", were cheered and comforted? To me it seems utterly impossible. I cannot think that Thyatira represents Papal, Sardis Protestant ages. But if the interpretation utterly fails (notwithstanding some striking coincidences) in two of the Epistles, covering more than two-thirds of the entire period supposed to be included, it may safely be rejected. The "things which are," though confessedly co-extensive with the Seven Churches, evidently did not include the fifth and following centuries of this dispensation.\*

\* The order of precedence of the Churches in the approbation of the Lord is as follows (the figures representing the order of their enumeration):

2. Smyrna.	3. Pergamos.
6. Philadelphia.	5. Sardis.
1. Ephesus.	7. Laodicea.
4. Thyatira.	

The reader may compare this with the order of the dispensation-parables in Matt. xiii.

What, then, is represented to us by the Seven Churches of Asia, under the designation of "the things which are"? I think it is the primal condition of essential unity and local plurality, which belonged to the Church gathered from among the Gentiles, as we see it in the New Testament.\* The Church of Jerusalem was a Mother Church, with something of metropolitan authority, claimed and conceded (Acts xv.) ; but the assemblies at Antioch, at Thessalonica, at Corinth, at Rome, were equals among themselves, acknowledging not even a *primam inter pares*, as regards authority or control. The subsequent claim of this, by the Church at Rome, grounded on the metropolitan supremacy of that *city*, was the introduction of the terrible apostasy, which takes such colossal proportions in the experience of the Church, and (as I judge) in the Divine preadmonitions. But if this condition,—one Church in one city, all the saints in one locality forming but a single community,† acknowledging

\* The "mystery of the Seven," I suppose to lie in this; that those Churches in the Asian province symbolised the entire Church then existent; perhaps, however, viewed in plurality rather than in unity (yet not necessarily; since the sevenfold character of the Spirit is not inconsistent with his essential unity); but not extending beyond that age.

+ Let it not be supposed that I attach any importance to this community's all meeting in a single building: in imperial Rome, for instance, this would have been physically impossible; and, under the eye of the jealous Nero, most impolitic and imprudent. What I mean is that there was in one place but one body; the full brotherhood and membership of all the saints in that place being recognised in that one body. Such passages as Rom. xvi. 5, 14, 15; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; Col. iv. 15; Philem. i. 2; appear to me to suggest that in large cities the saints in apostolic times habitually gathered for worship in small companies in private houses.

full brotherhood, indeed, with the saints meeting in other cities, yet quite self-contained and independent as to local management,—if this was, as I believe, the condition in which the Gentile Church was planted and maintained by Paul and his fellow-workers, then this was the condition viewed with complacency by the Lord, which marked each Church as a candlestick of pure gold. This position the Church has long ceased to hold; metropolitan claims to supremacy, by Constantinople and Rome, thorough apostasy in doctrine and practice, intolerance and persecution of the Truth, and successive separations and schisms, have all operated to work changes, till a candlestick of gold in each city is very far from being a true picture of the things which *now* are.\*

\* “ Let me ask any spiritual Christian, who has been trained in the principles of Low Churchism or Dissent, whether the notion of one candlestick connected with each city, does not, as regards these subjects, introduce into his mind an element of thought entirely new. He has either been careless about the subject, and so has no judgment at all, or else his views require that there should have been many candlesticks for each city; for he thinks that Christians may be rightly gathered around their respective points of difference; that they may worship separately, teach separately, act separately, and yet be all rightly acknowledged as Churches of God. But is this what we find in the Revelation? We find *one* candlestick representing the gathered saints of *one* city. This is the only pattern for the Gentile Churches. That they have long since ceased to answer to it is plain; but it makes no little difference in the sight of God, whether we assign as the reason for the want of correspondence, that no pattern has been given, or whether we are willing to confess that sin has been the cause of the variation. To neglect the pattern God has given, is in itself a sin; but it is a sin which is sure to multiply; for when the human will begins to act, uncontrolled by the directions of the word of God, manifold results are speedily produced, results which cannot but be evil. And unless, through God's mercy, we are quickly called

If this be so, it is manifest we are entitled to look for "the things which must be hereafter," in any period which followed the loss by the Churches of their golden candlestick character. How early this took place, perhaps only the eye of God was competent to judge: but that it was already imminent may be gathered from the warnings and threatenings contained in the Epistles, particularly in the first and in the last.

#### V. THE THINGS HEREAFTER.

Let us glance, then, at the scene introductory to "the things hereafter", as shown in heaven to the prophet, to seek whether it contains any hint whereby we may infer the relative time of the disclosures about to be made. Nor have we far to search.

One of the pillars on which the Futurist interpretation rests is the assumption that chapters iv. and v. contain the description of an *actual* scene, in which the Church (the *Zoa* and the Elders) is seen in heaven. It is argued that this cannot be till after the Rapture of the Saints, because until then the Church is not in heaven, but on earth. Hence the Seals, Trumpets, back to the standard of his word, we shall mistake these results for good; vindicate them; rejoice in them; and so, when God would call to weeping and mourning, behold joy and gladness, eating flesh and drinking wine; but no penitence, no confession of sin. Is this an over-drawn picture of the present hour?" ("Thoughts on the Apocalypse," by B. W. Newton, p. 26.)

With much of the chapter from which this extract is taken, I agree; and I have the more pleasure in saying so, because I am compelled to dissent totally from the general conclusions of the book. Mr. J. N. Darby, in his "Examination," does not appear to me to have at all disproved Mr. N.'s reasoning about the candlesticks of gold.

and Vials, must all refer to things subsequent to the Rapture.

Assuming this to be so, it is plain that the delivery of the seven-sealed Book by the Father to the Lamb, and the opening of it by the latter, must also be subsequent to the Rapture; for this is the grand incident of the scene, and the Zoa and the Elders play a prominent part in the august transaction. Then the Seven-sealed Book is not yet (*i.e.*, at the time in which we now live) opened, for the Rapture is not yet come; and no one in the heaven, nor upon the earth, nor under the earth (v. 3), has yet looked thereon. But such a conclusion would be false; for the book has been opened, and its contents have been published for eighteen centuries.

I must ask for clearness of thought in my readers for the apprehending of this argument. The question is not the *signification* of the seals, but the *publication* of their contents. The actual events, prefigured by the conquering rider on the white horse, and his successors, may, for anything that my present argument shows, remain unfulfilled for a thousand years yet to come. I am not speaking of what will be the accomplishment of these representations, but of the representations themselves. The Lamb opened the first Seal, and John saw (in what manner, I know not; perhaps pictorially, but this is unimportant) the white horse and his rider, furnished with the bow and the crown, going on his victorious progress. This representation, then, was (*whatever it may mean*) the contents,—hitherto concealed and locked from every eye but that of God,—of the first Seal, which was now opened to the eyes of all that

celestial assemblage, and, among them, to those of John. Now if John had reported merely that he had seen the Seals opened, but had given not a hint of what they contained, it would have been legitimate to argue that this is only a visionary scene, and needs not imply that the Book is yet *actually* unsealed. And this argument would, I think, have been valid. But John immediately published the contents of the sealed Book; and, for the last eighteen hundred years, millions of persons have known what had been hidden under those Seals. It is therefore manifest that the scene of Revelation iv. and v. has long ago occurred; it is impossible that the Book can be a sealed book and an opened book at the same time. But it is an opened book, for we know its contents; and the lamentation of v. 4 can never be taken up again. What, then, becomes of the argument that the *fulfilment* of the seals is future, because the Church is seen in heaven in chapter iv.? Is not the conclusion founded on this basis utterly untenable, and even absurd?

If a Futurist interpreter ask me, "In what way, then, do you suppose the redeemed to have been in heaven during John's lifetime?" it would be quite legitimate for me to answer, "I do not certainly know".\* For the matter pendent is not correctness of interpretation of details, but whether there is that in chapters iv. and v., which compels us to project the accomplishment of the prefigurations that follow these chapters, to a period subsequent to the Rapture of the Church. And the *opening* of the Seals shows that this is untenable.†

\* Might I not refer him to Ephesians ii. 6? But I am not interpreting.

† I feel persuaded that many readers will pass over this argument as



It is frequently objected to the Presentist application of this prophecy that the Divine titles, and the relationships between the saints and God and the Lord Jesus are different from those generally presented in the Apostolic Epistles ; therefore it cannot be the Church whom we see here. I admit the premises, but refuse the inference. The Revelation is, without controversy, not a second edition of the Epistle to the Ephesians. The tender, intimate, heavenly relations of believers to the Father and the Son, do not constitute the main features of this book, though these are certainly not denied, nor even ignored. (See Rev. i. 5, 6 ; ii. 26 ; iii. 5, 21 ; iv. 6 ; xiv. 4 ; xix. 7, 11 ; xxi. 9.) It is " the Book of the Throne when the King had been rejected on earth".\* " The relation of the Throne of God to the nations, and the manner in which God will visit them in wrath . . . is the *chief* subject of the Revelation".† It is an unveiling of the secret government of the world on behalf of the Church, by the Risen One on the Throne of God, to whom all power in heaven and in earth is committed, while the Church fills a place of tribulation and testimony. Therefore it is no wonder that we find numerous examples of judicial visitation, yet always *secret*, and what we distinctively call *providential*; quite parallel with that instance which is shown to us in Acts xii. 21–23. Herod's rage against the Church, his murder of James,

of little or no force. Yet so convinced am I of its cogency, *if rightly apprehended*, that I could be well content to allow the whole question between Futurism and Presentism to hinge upon it.

\* Darby : " Notes on the Revelation," p. 5.

† Newton : " Thoughts on the Apocalypse," p. 14.

his blasphemous pride, and his sudden destruction by God's angel, are all of exactly the same character, as the prominent scenes of the Revelation.\* If the one was not inconsistent with *this* dispensation, why the other? "Prince of the kings of the earth" is the last of the titles of the adorable Lord Jesus, to which the Church (in the person of John) instantly responds in her burst of praise, "Unto Him that loveth *us*" (Rev. i. 5). And is not this one of the aspects, "Head over all" (Eph. i. 22), "Head of all principality and power" (Col. ii. 10), in which the Church recognises Him as her own *peculium*, the gift of the Father's love to her?

#### VI. WHO ARE THE SAINTS?

The school of interpretation, which views the Church as bodily in heaven before the seals are opened, has, of course, the *onus* of explaining otherwise the "saints" who play so important a part in this book; about whose doings and sufferings and ultimate destiny, indeed, the whole book is occupied. Who then are the "saints" so distinguished? A remnant of Jews, it is replied,

\* When Mr. Trotter speaks (*London Monthly Review*, 1857, p. 367) of "the full unmingled grace of the present dispensation", he uses a phrase which cannot be maintained. Of course, as *towards the Saints*, there is no controversy about grace being unmingled; it is so in the Revelation as elsewhere. The contrast to which he alludes is between "the judicial character of the heavenly scenes and personages in this book", and "the full unmingled grace of the present dispensation", of course *towards unbelievers*. It is sufficient to ask, Was the smiting of Herod an act of full, unmingled grace, or an act of judgment? I beg my candid reader to answer this question definitely.

found in Palestine after the Rapture of the Church has taken place. The Jewish people having been reinstated in their own land, by some great European power, Anti-christ enters into covenant with them, and they build their temple. He keeps this treacherous covenant for three years and a half, and then sets his own image in the temple, and claims sole worship to himself. For three years and a half more he prospers in Jerusalem, his claims submitted to by the majority of the Jews, but resisted and testified against by a small faithful remnant, who are in part killed by him ("the martyred remnant"), while a part survive to the manifestation of Jesus ("the spared remnant"). This is the hypothesis on which the action of the Revelation (chapters vi.-xix.) is considered by Futurists to turn, as I gather it from Mr. Trotter's "Plain Papers," to which work I shall chiefly refer in the following animadversions.

And, first of all, it seems to me that the actions and character of this remnant, if not its very existence, as thus understood, are wholly unproved from clear Scripture. That Israel will be restored to Palestine is undoubted; and *probably* it will be immediately after the removal of the Church. The term "remnant", frequently used in the Prophets, seems generally to point to the entire body, as being *all that is left* after the course of the ages of tribulation through which the chosen people have passed; and doubtless many of the inspired predictions belong to the period which elapses between their restoration and the manifestation of Jesus to them. That there will be a grand confederacy of nations, in some way, against them, and a calamitous

siege of Jerusalem, seems to be legitimately inferred from Holy Scripture (as Ezek. xxxviii.; Dan. xi. 40–45; Joel ii., iii.; Zech. xii., xiv.; Rev. xvi. 16, xix. 19; and many other passages). But what proof is there that the elaborate history of a remnant of this remnant, written beforehand with such minuteness and with such confidence of assertion by Futurist expositors, is true? Little proof is attempted, indeed; and that little, when examined with a searching reference to Scripture, and divested of hypothesis, becomes so attenuated, that the whole scheme, vast as it is, can be compared to nothing but a pyramid made to stand on its apex. Of the texts cited\* in its support, some (as just observed) prove no more than that the number restored, when compared with the promised multiplication (“as the sand of the sea”), shall be but “a very small remnant”. Isa. i. 9; x. 22 (compare Rom. ix. 27–29); xi. 11; Joel ii. 32; Mic. iv. 7, certainly mean but this. Others are not relevant. Zechariah xii. is relied on to show † that there shall be, during the anticipated crisis, a remnant converted by the Spirit of God. Now, unless this conversion takes place before or during the manifestation of the Antichrist, so that this converted remnant can be slain by him for their faithful testimony, the passage is not relevant. But the conversion is distinctly attributed to their *sight* of the Lord: “They shall *look upon Me* whom they have pierced”; which (compare Rev. i. 7) certainly will be at his public manifestation, when “He cometh with clouds”, to slay the Wicked One with the breath of his lips. And this, on the Futurists’

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 301–340. † P. 310.

own scheme, is at the very close of the Antichrist's career, and not at the commencement or middle of it. Besides, Mr. Trotter\* distinctly states that the remnant does not recognise Jesus. How can they till He reveals Himself? Christ they may look for; but that Jesus is the Christ they do not learn till they look on the Pierced One, and wail. Yet the saints who suffer under Antichrist in the Revelation are distinctly believers in Jesus; "who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus" (xii. 17). Here are those that "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (xiv. 12). Not *Christ* merely, let it be observed, but *Jesus*. The saints of the Apocalypse, moreover, know the power of the blood for salvation: the multitude that come out of the great tribulation, "washed their robes . . . in the blood of the Lamb" (vii. 14); and in the triumphal ode which is sung in heaven, on the casting down of the Dragon, those who had been maligned are said to have "overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony; and to have loved not their lives unto the death" (xii. 11). Thus both these blessed companies are in perfect accord with the Church, which, in John's person, responds to the mention of Jesus Christ, "He loveth us, and washed us' . . . in his own blood" (i. 5); and with those whose title to a place in the Holy City (*the Lamb's wife*, be it remembered) is that they have washed their robes (xxii. 14, *Crit. Text.*). It is true, Mr. Trotter seems to allow the former to be *Gentiles*, on earth, after the Church is removed. But

\* P. 326 et seq.

is not such an assumption of Gentile *saints* between the Rapture of the Church and the Descent of the Lord entirely gratuitous, and unsupported by any other Scriptures? Is it not at variance with the solemn words of Revelation xxii. 11, 12? How are they to believe? Who will preach the Gospel to them? Not Israel, as in Isaiah lxvi. 19, certainly; for that is after the Lord's manifestation in flaming fire (ver. 15; 2 Thess. i. 8); *they* do not yet know salvation themselves. And the Church has been wholly caught away.

Certain passages in the Psalms, however, constitute the palmary argument for the assumed character and sufferings of this godly remnant; and, in particular, Psalm lxxix., which is affirmed to "refer to the martyred remnant in days to come, *undoubtedly*".\* Now, on a careful revision of this Psalm, I do not see a single expression which may not have applied to the sufferings of Jerusalem under the Babylonish siege. To this most obvious and natural application, Mr. Trotter merely objects, "This could scarcely be the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, as we know, from Jeremiah, that the remnant of that day were preserved and well treated. Besides, the application of this Psalm is to an epoch long subsequent to Jerusalem's first desolation. 'How long, Lord? wilt Thou be angry for ever?' is a plea which could not be urged when Israel was just beginning to be visited by God's wrath." These two reasons are really all, every word, that the writer urges against that application. As to the former, I need only ask the reader to turn to the Lament-

ations of Jeremiah for a full parallel to the wailings of this Psalm. "Well treated"! There is not a breathing in it which has not its counterpart in that short but plaintive book, which, as every one knows, bemoans the outrages of the Chaldeans. As to the latter reason, an equally cogent reply may be given. The wrath of God against Israel, so far from just beginning, had been working for three hundred years (see 2 Kings x. 32, 33); even from Hazael's day.

But there is one more point, which, from the frequency and evident confidence with which it is pressed, appears to be much relied on. It may be found in "Plain Papers", abundantly opened throughout chapters xvi. and xvii. It is simply this: the example of our Lord Jesus and of Stephen, and the inculcations in the Gospels and Epistles, show that we, of this dispensation, are called to suffer meekly and forgivingly, without any attempt at vengeance. But the godly remnant, supposed to be seen in the Old Testament, cry for vengeance on their oppressors, and therefore cannot be the Church; while the saints of the Revelation are considered to sympathise in this respect with the old rather than the new dispensation. Supposing the discrepancy between the dispensations to have all the force here claimed for it, it would not at all touch the saints of the Revelation. The cry for vengeance attributed to the martyrs (in vi. 10), is an obvious mistake. No suffering saints are represented as crying for vengeance, but "the souls of those that had been slain",\* which were lying under the altar, like the ashes of a sacrifice. Not

\* I quote Dr. Tregelles's version. It is the pass. pret. participle.

a word is said to intimate that the martyrs had not gone to their cruel death as sheep dumb before their shearer, but only to intimate what voice their slaughter had in the ear of God. We do not read that Abel cried for vengeance when smitten by the murderous hand of Cain; but "*his blood cried*" (Gen. iii. 10); a momentous distinction, surely. On the other hand, what is said of the two symbolic witnesses (in xi. 5), is so closely parallel with what is attributed to the Prophet Jeremiah (v. 14), that it is certainly no more necessary to suppose that the two witnesses actually vomit avenging fire on their personal enemies, than that the meek and mourning prophet personally and literally burned Israel with fire, or that he personally threw down, destroyed, and rooted out kingdoms and nations. (See Jer. i. 10; also, Ezek. xliii. 3.)

However, what is presented as so opposed to the spirit of the Church in the saints of the Psalms, etc., is not the infliction of personal vengeance, but the asking it at the hand of God.\* But is not this argument very much overstrained? Is it so diametrically opposed to the spirit of Christ to be looking forward to what God

\* After the above was written, I casually lighted upon a touching account of the martyrdom, in 1528, of one of the early Scottish Reformers, Patrick Hamilton (Lorimer's "*Precursors of Knox*," London, 1857). When this worthy confessor was bound to the stake, he prayed to God "to be merciful to the people who persecuted him, for there were many of them blinded in ignorance; that they knew not what they did." When nearly burnt through the body, his last audible words were, "How long, Lord, shall darkness overwhelm this kingdom? *How long wilt Thou suffer* this tyranny of men? Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Was this latter appeal to the judgment of God, inconsistent with the former intercession? There is no example of saints in the Revelation avenging



has promised us? Cannot the Church cry, "Avenge me of mine adversary!" (Luke xviii. 3) when God has promised to "bruise Satan under *our* feet shortly" (Rom. xvi. 20)? Is it not to *the Church* that Jesus holds out the promise of "power over the nations", yea, of "ruling them with a rod of iron", and "breaking them in shivers like a potter's vessel" (Rev. ii. 26, 27)? And will not this be fulfilled when his glorified Bride accompanies Him to "judge and make war" (xix. 11-21)? Is not judging the world, and even angels, a prerogative which, as the inspired apostle assumes every one to know, is reserved for "the saints" (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3)? Or are "the saints" here, the "ye" of Corinth, a Jewish remnant? Mr. Trotter quotes some of the imprecatory Psalms, and asks, "Christian reader, are these the anticipations which the Spirit of God leads *you* to cherish?" And he is bold to answer for his reader, No! But I, as a Christian reader, with Romans xvi. 20, and Revelation xix. in my view, prefer to answer for myself; and I do not shrink from answering, Yes! I do not, indeed, want vengeance now, for God tells me it is his, and He will repay; and, like my Lord, I commit myself to Him that judgeth righteously. But when He comes to take me to Himself, I expect to be wholly conformed to Him, with nothing of human weakness, nothing of human passion, left; and since He tells me that one of

themselves. Even the symbolic witnesses, with all their power of fire and death, do not attempt to defend themselves. The judicial power attributed to them is, I suppose, power with God; power of avenging, certainly not exercised by themselves, but by God on their behalf. It is prophetic denunciation.

my very first occupations will be the execution with Himself of righteous vengeance, I do not at all fear but that what He ordains will be quite comely in my eyes. When Babylon is to be overwhelmed, the command is, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and apostles, and prophets; because God judged *your* cause upon her."\* It is the cause, not of a Jewish remnant, but of the apostles, among others, that is avenged: and will they demur to the congratulation, think you, and decline the righteous joy? A joy, which, *on this very ground*, that the blood of God's servants is avenged at the great whore's hand, fills all heaven (*not earth*) with reiterated acclamations and hallelujahs!

But yet again; the very strongest imprecatory Psalms are the breathings of the meek and lowly Man, Christ Jesus. Look, for instance, at Psalm lxix.; and note the rapid transition from verses 20 and 21 to verses 22-28; at xxxv. 3-6, 8, 9, 26; at xl. 14, 15; at xli. 5-10; at xvii. 9-14; at lv. 15, 23.† I beseech my thoughtful and candid reader to turn up these Psalms in his Bible, one by one, and say whether, with these appeals of Jesus before him, there is anything inconsistent with the present calling and spirit of saints, in their committing themselves to the Righteous Father under the persecution of the ungodly.

\* I follow Dr. Tregelles's translation.

† I have cited none but such as are distinctly attributed to the Lord Jesus by Mr. Bellett "Short Meditations on the Psalms," (1848); a Futurist writer who sees the "Remnant" very largely in this book. But the references to the Lord Jesus asking for vengeance might have been greatly increased.

Unless, indeed, we may aim to be holier, more gracious, more meek, than that Blessed Lamb Himself, who was led to the slaughter. Greatly to be deprecated, and jealously to be repudiated, is mere sentiment in religion: the written word is our only guide; the walk of Jesus our only example: it is a sheer delusion of the Devil to set us upon a higher grade of benevolence, of meekness, of grace, than the Holy Ghost has prescribed to us. This is my answer to Mr. Trotter's question.

There is a link of connection between these "saints" and the Church, which I will venture to suggest, though it is not in the way of logical proof. What I may perhaps call the prologue and the epilogue of this grand Divine epic (viz. chapters i. 1-8; and xxii. 6-21), are, I think, worthy of the closest study as aids in the understanding of the argument. Now the song of the living ones and elders who present the prayers of the saints (v. 8-10), says of those saints, "Thou madest them unto our God a kingdom and priests:\* and they reign on the earth." The difficulty in the latter clause, of the present tense for the future (merely the loss of a single letter in the original word), if that, indeed, be the true reading, which is very doubtful, would press equally on both hypotheses. For surely, the Jewish saints under Antichrist's rule will be no more actually then reigning than the Church now. But compare the former clause, "Thou [the Lamb] madest them unto our God a kingdom and priests," with what is said of herself by the Church, as represented by John, "He [Jesus] made for us a kingdom, priests, unto his

\* Accepting the critical reading.

God and Father" (i. 6) ; the peculiarly abrupt construction being the same in both passages.

There is, however, as I venture to think, a much more cogent reason for understanding the term "the saints" in the Revelation as signifying members of the Church proper, living on earth during the present dispensation. And the importance of the identification can hardly be over-rated in an exposition of this Book ; because, if it can be proved that "the saints" worn out and slain by the Wild Beast are certainly *the same body* as the Bride of Christ, the whole interpretation of that Futurist school, which removes the Church from the earth after the end of chapter iii., falls to the ground.

The expression, "the saints" (οἱ ἅγιοι), occurs in the Revelation, as a distinctive appellation, twelve times :—

1. The four living-ones and four-and-twenty elders present incense, which is the prayers of "*the saints*" (τῶν ἁγίων). (Chap. v. 8.)

2. The angel at the golden altar adds much incense to the prayers of "all *the saints*" (τῶν ἁγίων πάντων). (viii. 3.)

3. The smoke of the incense ascends with the prayers of "*the saints*" (τῶν ἁγίων). (viii. 4.)

4. After the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the four-and-twenty elders worship God, saying ; "The time of the dead [is come], that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to *the saints*" (τοῖς ἁγίοις). (xi. 18.)

5. To the Wild Beast out of the sea it was given to make war with "*the saints*" (τῶν ἁγίων). (xiii. 7.)

6. On the announcement of the retributive justice

finally to be executed on the Wild Beast, it is said, "Here is the patience and the faith of *the saints*" (τῶν ἁγίων). (xiii. 10.)

7. On the announcement of the doom of those who worship the Wild Beast, there is a like encouraging utterance:—"Here is the patience of *the saints* (τῶν ἁγίων). (xiv. 12.)

8. \* On the pouring out of the third vial, the angel of the waters extols the retributive justice of God,— "For they have shed the blood of *saints* (ἁγίων) and prophets." (xvi. 6.)

9. The great whore is drunken with the blood of "*the saints*" (τῶν ἁγίων). (xvii. 6.)

10. In her is found the blood of prophets and of "*saints*" (ἁγίων). (xviii. 24.)

11. The Bride is arrayed in fine linen, which is the righteousness (*lit.* righteousnesses) of "*the saints*" (τῶν ἁγίων). (xix. 8.)

12. After the thousand years, Gog and Magog encompass the camp of "*the saints*" (τῶν ἁγίων), and the beloved city. (xx. 9.)

Now what can we gather from these notices? That the Revelation has a perfect dramatic unity, I presume I may take for granted. It is the story of one grand conflict (whether extending over 1800 years, or over seven years) between the Lord Jesus and Satan; sometimes brought on the scene personally, but for the most part acting representatively,—the Lord Jesus by his witnessing and suffering "*Saints*"; Satan by

\* I omit chap. xv. 3, because "*saints*" is confessedly a false reading for "*nations*" (ἐθνῶν).

his endowed potentate, known as "the Wild Beast". For a while the victory seems wholly in Satan's hands; his Beast makes war with "the Saints", overcomes them, sheds their blood; and this mainly (xviii. 24) by the agency of the great whore that rules and rides upon the Beast. "The Saints" are given into the hands of this Beast and his whore: they witness in sackcloth (some of them at least); their prayers go up to God; they exercise patience and faith; they suffer; they die.

At length the tide of triumph turns. The queenly whore is burned with fire; whereat heaven resounds with hallelujahs. The holy apostles and prophets (*οἱ ἅγιοι ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται*) are called to rejoice,—“For God hath avenged *you* on her!” and much people in heaven *do* rejoice.

A time had been previously announced when the Lord would give reward unto his servants the prophets, and to the *Saints*. And now, on the judgment of the great whore, amidst the thundering acclamations of all heaven, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, is brought forth to the marriage, being first arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, which is declared to be the righteousness of "*the Saints*."\*

What Saints? No Saints have been alluded to, except those worn out, persecuted, reviled, and slain;—and these, according to Futurism, were the "Jewish remnant." The pure and bright linen, in which the Bride of the Lamb is arrayed before all heaven's admiring hosts, is the righteousness of a "Jewish remnant"!

But probably my brethren will say, "No; the term

\* I beseech my readers to notice the definite article here.

‘Saints’ here does belong to the Church; but it does not follow that, where it elsewhere occurs, it may not belong to the Jewish remnant”. I accept the alternative. Let us see what it is worth.

Throughout this grand Drama there is a body of persons who play a very prominent part; indeed, the Drama is mainly occupied about them. They are known by a distinct appellation. They are holy, harmless, meek, patient, unresisting; but they are trodden down, worn out, treated as vile criminals, tormented, and slain. Behind the scenes, however, there is One whom they serve, and for whose sake they suffer; He encourages them to bear, on the assured hope that He will ultimately avenge them.

At length He arises to judgment: the terrible one is doomed; the blood of “the Saints” is found in her; her guilt is self-proved: the smoke of her torment goes up. And now, in heaven, “the Saints” are brought forward, clothed in an unspotted, lustrous righteousness. “O what a glorious avenging is this!” we say. “What a noble acquittal from every vile charge falsely brought against them on earth! What a precious compensation for all their sufferings and deaths!” No, we are quite wrong. Our Futurist brethren will correct our mistake here. This is a totally different body. These are not “the Saints,” at all, that have been suffering and dying in the Drama: they had no connection with them. It is true, the same appellation is given to them; it is true, no intimation is given that this term, “the Saints”, is henceforward to bear a different meaning from what it has borne all along;

it is true, that "the Saints" who have been suffering, do not, *under this appellation*, get any public vindication at all; it is true, that "the Saints" who are thus honoured, have not, *under this appellation*, suffered at all, by anything we learn from this book: and yet we must believe that the suffering "Saints" and the vindicated "Saints" are two bodies, having no connection with each other!

I ask, is such an interpretation true? Is it probable? May I be forgiven for adding, is it possible? \*

\* The above argument was originally communicated by me to the *London Monthly Review* for May, 1857.

That the reader may see to what a resource an acute and experienced Futurist expositor is driven by its force, I subjoin the reply of the Rev. James Kelly, *in extenso*, merely omitting two sentences, which were personally complimentary to myself. Is it so, that the only mode of escaping the conclusion that "the Saints" of the Revelation are identical with the Church, is by denying that the very Bride of the Lamb is identical with her either? Here are Mr. James Kelly's *ipsissima verba*:—

"He [Mr. Gosse] must allow me to remind him that the 'assumption' in regard to whom 'the Saints' in Rev. xiii. mean, was on the side of the argument which he espouses. I merely alleged that the title might belong to a Jewish remnant, who are to run their career after the Church shall have been translated. As no proof that the Church is intended was advanced by your contributor, to whom I replied, it sufficed for me simply to put him to the proof.

"But now to the proof, as urged by Mr. Gosse, and, I admit, with much apparent force. It rests altogether upon another assumption, namely, that 'the Bride the Lamb's wife,' in Rev. xix., means the Church.

"Will Mr. Gosse not be shocked at me, if I say that such a view, held formerly by myself, I have been constrained, by the sheer force of investigation, to renounce; and that I hold the Bride, the Lamb's wife, in Rev. xix. and xxii., to be strictly constituted of the glorified Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles (the heads of the Jewish nation); and that the conjunction of the city prepared for them with the earthly



## VII. THE TEST OF FULFILMENT.

But the grand test of any interpretation of a prophecy is a correspondence of the things accomplished with the things predicted. And I cannot but think that to a candid mind, loving and maintaining truth without any prejudice, well acquainted with the events that have taken place upon the theatre of the Roman earth since the prophecy was given,—the evidence of fulfilment is absolutely irresistible. I insist on these two qualifications in one competent to judge. There must be a willingness to receive conclusions legitimately deduced, without a dread as to whither they may lead. The lack of such candour, I much fear, has something to do with the maintenance of the Futurist interpretation. And I do not so much glance at the design to

Jerusalem and her children, will consummate Jehovah's marriage to the land, and initiate the regeneration of all things? Perhaps the believer's glorification as a being 'clothed upon with his house from heaven' (2 Cor. v. 2), is the most helpful analogy wherewith to aid our conception of this glorification of the earthly Jerusalem, by the embrace, as it were, of the heavenly.

"If it stumble brethren, thus to interpret the bridal relation, usually appropriated to the Church, of future Jewish glory, be it observed that such relation, with all the unity it implies, is yet not the most intimate assigned to her in the word. To her belongs the still closer unity of being HIS BODY, HIS FULNESS (Eph. i. 23). And this is set forth in the *living creatures* of the Apocalypse; nor is there, in order to the representation of the Church, throughout the visions of that book, any transition from this symbol to another. Moreover, in regard to the New Jerusalem, it is utterly incongruous to identify its import with that of the living creatures; for from one of them on the throne of God and of the Lamb, the angel who shows the celestial city to the apostle purports to have come; and though the scene of vision then changes, the throne of God and of the Lamb, wherein are the living creatures, is still mentioned as distinct from the city. (Comp. Rev. xvi. 7; xxi. 9; xxii. 1.)" (*Lond. Monthly Review*, 1857, p. 552.)

screen Popery, which is probably the ground of Tractarian Futurism, as at the views of those Christians "who profess to meet simply as brethren". These, having seen how unscriptural are the alliance with the State of national churches, and the sectarian divisions of dissenting bodies generally; and having, as they judge in faithfulness to God, separated themselves from such evils, essaying to take a place more like that of the candlesticks of gold, are in great danger of seeing no evil but that against which they themselves protest, or at least of magnifying this and diminishing all others. Hence the ignorant observation that I so often hear, that "Protestantism is just as bad as Popery"; and the unexpressed but sufficiently manifest fear, that if they allowed the Protestant interpretation of the Revelation, they should concede that the existent state of the Reformed churches is viewed by God with any measure (however comparative) of complacency.

But, again, how can we form a judgment on the question, whether any of the apocalyptic symbols have been fulfilled in bygone events, unless we possess the knowledge which enables us to pass those events under review? Surely it is as impossible as for a person born blind to match the colour of a ribbon at a mercer's shop. Yet a knowledge of History, we are constantly told by Futurist expositors, is perfectly needless.\*

\* Thus Dr. Tregelles:—"We have no need whatever to go out of the Scripture itself in order to gain information as to those things of which we read in Scripture. . . . History is not revelation; and we are nowhere commanded to search history to learn *the truths found in God's word*." ("Remarks on Prophetic Visions of Daniel," 1847, p. 6.) I pray

Such statements might well be left to the refutation supplied by common sense ; only that I know how deep a hold they take, by the frequency of their repetition, by their oracular guise, and by the agreeable flattery they administer to the ignorance of the illiterate, on the minds of the majority of readers. The poor like to be told by those whom they look up to as teachers, that they do not need human learning to understand the word of God ; but *is it true ?* If it is, how vain and useless the collation of codices, the balancing of various readings, and the copious samples of Greek criticism which we find in the Expositions of these very teachers !

the reader to note the fallacy implied in the words which I have put in italics. What we need to learn from history is, *what events have taken place*, in order that we may judge whether they correspond with certain predictions ; not, of course, what truths are in the Word.

Thus Mr. Trotter : " The humble Christian, unable to read the Scriptures in any language but his own, and entirely unacquainted with the details of profane history, may, nevertheless, prayerfully study the prophetic Scriptures. . . . ' History was not written in heaven ; and the attempt to interpret prophecy by history has been most injurious to the ascertaining of its real meaning. . . . History gives man's estimate of events ; and he has no right to assume that the events he deems important have a place in prophecy at all ; and it is clear that he must understand prophecy before he can apply it to any.' " (" Plain Papers on Prophetic Subjects," 1855, p. 343 ; quoted, however, but without acknowledgment, from Mr. Darby's ' Notes.') Again, " What we cannot but deem most objectionable, is, the attempt by minute historic details to interpret these chapters [viz. Rev. vi.-xix.], as though they had found in these details their final accomplishment. This is . . . to make the Church dependent, for the understanding of God's word, on an amount of human learning and information altogether beyond the reach of Christians generally." (*Ibid.*, p. 352.)

In correspondence with Mr. Elliott (*Lond. Mo. Rev.* ; April, May, June, 1857), Mr. Trotter speaks on this subject in a very much more moderate tone. Still I think he overstates the fact, when he affirms that

Nay, how useless the very expositions themselves ! for why should Mr. Trotter write "Plain Papers," or Dr. Tregelles "Remarks," on what, by their own showing, must have been equally "plain" to the most unlettered Christian as to them ? But, indeed, the entire dogma rests on a fallacy ; for it confounds the opinions of historians with the events which they record. For example, I take up the Jewish War of the historian Josephus ; its value to me is not what he thought of different matters, but the facts, the actual events, that took place, and to which he testifies. I read the predictions of the Lord Jesus in Luke xxi. Of course I know that He spoke truth ; that all He described

a peasant or an artisan is not dependent on learned men for his knowledge that a prophecy has been fulfilled. I have had some experience of peasants and artisans, real converted persons, holy and faithful ; and I find that a considerable proportion of them are not only dependent on educated persons to translate the mind of God out of Hebrew and Greek into English, but to explain that very English version in a homely conversational way, line upon line, before they can get any correct ideas at all out of it. I should like to see the results, truly set down, of a catechetical examination of the uneducated portion of any gathering of saints in the country parts of England, on the meaning of the detailed symbols of the Apocalypse. I wonder how much of the elaborate system of Mr. Newton's "Thoughts," or even of Mr. Trotter's "Plain Papers," would be educed from those, dear worthy Christian people though they be, who have never learned geography or history, nor even to read with understanding. It may be said this is an extreme case ; but if the principle contended for is good for anything, it should apply to such persons, who form so large a portion of our assemblies. Have not such persons received the Holy Ghost ? Of course *very much of truth must be taken from others on trust* ; or where is the need of human ministry in the Church of God ? I daresay I shall be misrepresented by some as denying the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church. But I appeal to known facts, and plain common sense.

must take place some time or other. But this is not the exposition of prophecy. I want to know whether any of those predictions have as yet been fulfilled ; and this I defy any one to show me merely by the word of God. By profane history, viz., by the testimony of Josephus, I ascertain that much of that chapter, as well as of other predictions of the Holy Word, has been fulfilled with a wonderful and most instructive precision ; but I could not possibly know this without the aid of profane history, unless by a direct revelation made to myself. What History does, is to make the whole world acquainted with certain facts on the testimony of witnesses ; which facts they could not otherwise know, either because of personal absence, if the facts were contemporary, or because of the lapse of time since they occurred. All we need to care about is not the opinions of the historian, but his truth in recording the facts ; and this is, for the most part, secured by the statements being published during the lifetime of thousands of persons able to contradict them if false, and also by the concurrent testimony of several witnesses. Facts may be coloured by the prejudice or passion of the writer ; but the historian knows full well that the limit within which he dares to do this is soon reached, and that to exceed it will be tantamount to literary suicide. The animus of Gibbon against Christianity is manifest in his every page ; but how little he has dared to warp, misstate, conceal, or invent facts, his enemies cannot but confess. Very few, indeed, and very unimportant, are the events which depend for their record on a single historian ; if not told likewise

by contemporaries, they are alluded to in private letters of the time, are commemorated in public documents, link themselves, in the relation of cause and effect, with other undoubted events, or, in many indirect ways, are exposed to the critical scrutiny of other regions and ages. History thus puts us, to some extent, into the position of having ourselves personally witnessed the events recorded ; and so it is of the very highest value, if we desire to ascertain whether any, and if so, which, of the Divine predictions have received an accomplishment. And the more full and accurate, the better attested, the history, the more perfectly are we qualified to judge of this.

Now it cannot be denied that there has arisen stealthily, and from small beginnings, a remarkable power in the professing Church, which gradually claimed and obtained supremacy over all other power in the Roman earth ; that the characteristics of this power were apostasy, blasphemy, tyranny, and long duration, in the city of the seven hills ; that the rise of this power was preceded by a degradation of the Fourth Empire from great prosperity as a Pagan power to its utter overthrow ; that its resuscitation in a professedly Christian form was speedily marked by deep spiritual debasement ; that a series of crushing calamities fell in succession upon it, in the midst of which the Empire lost its integrity, and has subsisted since only under the form of \* ten kingdoms owning a sort of unity with the old Roman integer. It cannot be denied that these things (and the enumeration might be greatly increased) are

\* This at least being their normal, and, so to speak, their average number.

*facts*, having a real and solemn bearing on the Church of God, and that they were before known to his omniscience. Is it then unlikely that He, in his great love and tender care, should give his servants a forewarning of them? Is it not, according to our poor views of fitness, much more likely that He should occupy his monitory note of "things that must come to pass" with these events of present, pressing, personal interest to the troubled Church, than with matters belonging exclusively to another people, in a far distant age, in which she could possibly feel none but a very indirect concern? And if the Blessed God did think it meet to forewarn us of these weighty things, how could He have done it better, consistently with his purpose of veiling the length of the duration, and of not needlessly interfering with the freedom of human action,—how could He have done it better than in the symbolisms of Daniel and the Revelation?

And here, I venture to think, the Presentist scheme of interpretation rests upon a basis which is impregnable. The concurrence of the grand outlines of history, not of unimportant incidents, selected at will by expositors, out of the recorded mass, to suit their systems (as Futurists love to say), but of those *great lines* of facts, broadly and deeply imprinted upon the unfolding ages, which have defined the fortunes of the Fourth Empire, and of the professing Church in the midst of it, the concurrence of these with the Divine predictions, enigmatic and dark though they confessedly were,—this is such a test as it is an outrage upon Truth and Wisdom to imagine could possibly consist with a hy-

pothesis of interpretation false in principle. Of course there is room, on such a hypothesis, for difference about details. There are many reasons why this should be ; as—1. the purpose of God to keep his Church in an expectant attitude, which would have been frustrated if the duration of intervening events could have been early inferred from the prophecies ; 2. the form in which the predictions were delivered, which, as just hinted, was that of (may I without irreverence say ?) a series of enigmas, sometimes (as in the first four Seals) resembling what is known among our young people as *acted charades* ; 3. the ignorance, or, at least, the varying amount of acquaintance, possessed by different expositors, of the details and relations of the events supposed to have been intended. To name no more, here are quite sufficient reasons why we ought not to wonder if, with a grand and general substratum of truth, there should co-exist a considerable diversity of judgment about details and individual symbols. Yet, strange to say, Futurist writers have generally magnified and aggrandized these differences, as if utterly fatal to the Presentist hypothesis, while the great concurrence in salient points has been quite ignored. I am most reluctant to impute dishonesty of design to godly men ; I would fain believe that Christian writers on both sides are seeking to remember that they are contending under those “eyes which are as a flame of fire” ; I pray that not a line of this tract may be penned without my own vivid apprehension of this solemn, sobering truth ; but when a teacher, like Mr. Trotter, says, “Suppose twenty expositors should agree with each



other in maintaining that these chapters [viz. Rev. vi. —xix.], or most of them, are absolutely and finally fulfilled, and yet have twenty conflicting theories of interpreting them . . . the basis on which they all proceed is a mistake” ;—and when he goes on, through a whole page, to present the suicidal result of these “twenty theories”, I cannot help inquiring, Is this an honest statement of the case? My own researches have led me to a very different conclusion ; namely, that a degree of uniformity has been attained, which is truly marvellous, and indeed triumphant, when we consider the temptation, to which every writer is liable, of seeking after originality, and of preferring his own thoughts to those of others. The details of these inquiries, which I have sought to make with perfect fairness and truth (for example, drawing up my list of authors to be examined, before I knew what their decisions would be, and leaving out none, because to include them would make the result less favourable), I give in a note below, and earnestly commend them to those students who have been in the habit of thinking that the discrepancies of Presentist expositors must necessarily overthrow their principle of interpretation.\* Let the calm and unprejudiced reader judge whether the result warrants Mr. Trotter’s portrait, of “twenty expositors with twenty conflicting theories.”

The Futurists can show us nothing of this sort. I do

\* The following list of Presentist expositors of the Apocalypse includes, so far as I have been able to ascertain, all of any note from the era of the Reformation to the publication of the *Horæ* of Mr. Elliott. Luther, Bullinger, Bale, Chytræus, Marlorat, Foxe, Brightman, Parens, Mede, Vitringa, Daubuz, Sir Isaac Newton, Whiston, Bengel, Bishop Newton,

not lay this as an accusation against the hypothesis, because it is unavoidable. In the very nature of things it cannot appeal to facts, because it assumes the fulfilment to be wholly future. But it is, nevertheless, an immense disadvantage for the scheme to labour under, in the eyes of the thoughtful inquirer after truth, who cannot help a reflection of this sort:—"Your interpretation *may be* quite true, but it is as yet merely a string of guesses; the facts which you say will by-and-by fulfil these symbols are as yet only *imaginary* facts; indeed,

Bicheno, Faber, Frere, Irving, Cuninghame, Habershon, Bickersteth, Birks, Woodhouse, Keith, Elliott; twenty-six in all. Out of these there are agreed as follows:—

1. That Seals I.—IV. are the decline of the Pagan Empire . . .	10
2. „ Seal VI. is the fall of Paganism under Constantine . . .	11
3. „ Trumpets I.—IV. are the Gothic invasions . . .	15
4. „ Trumpet V. is the Saracens . . . . .	17
5. „ „ VI. is the Turks . . . . .	21
6. „ The little opened Book refers to the Reformation . . .	12
7. „ Chap. XI. is the Papal persecution of saints as "heretics" . .	22
8. „ „ XII. is the depression and recession from view of } the true Church during the Papal ages . . . }	18
9. „ „ XIII. : the Beasts are aspects of the Papacy . . .	25
10. „ The Vials are the great French Revolution and its results . .	8
11. „ Chap. XVII. is Rome . . . . .	26
12. „ „ XVIII. is the Papacy . . . . .	26
13. „ A day is the symbol of a year . . . . .	19

It is right to observe that the first four Seals and first four Trumpets, referring each to several things, the agreement must be understood as admitting some diversity in details. Also that the application to the French Revolution of the Vials could not possibly be made by expositors who wrote before the close of the last century,—that is, more than half of the whole number. Sir I. Newton and Whiston, however, shrewdly foresaw the great infidel Revolution as the earthquake of the seventh Trumpet:—"That Infidelity was to break in pieces the Anti-Christian party which had so long corrupted Christianity." (Whiston.)

they are not facts at all, but only what *you suppose* will occur. Whereas the Presentist can point to a long series of *undoubted facts*; to things which God Himself, the God of providential government in the earth, has ordained and brought to pass (see Acts iv. 28), as the counterparts of these Divine symbols: and this gives him an invaluable vantage ground." Of course this is true only as regards *thinkers*, for there is no doubt that a multitude of disciples will implicitly believe, without inquiry, a teacher who asserts his dogmas with sufficient boldness; and all the more, if he flatters their ignorance, as if ignorance were itself an aid to a competent judgment.

#### VIII. THE ATTITUDE OF EXPECTATION.

That the delay of the Lord's appearing through long ages, which *facts* have shown to have been the Divine purpose, was a mystery carefully concealed from the Church in the Holy Ghost's communications, may be safely allowed: and this, even though we may now be able to trace, by the light of our advanced place in time, that purpose in them. We may allow, moreover, that it was the will of God that the Church should be ever looking for Jesus as near at hand. Yet these truths are often incautiously and unwarrantably urged. There is not a single passage in which the Lord's appearing is distinctly said to be so imminent as that no intervening event should occur. Such phrases as these—"I come quickly," "In such an hour as ye think not," "Watch; for ye know not when—," "Nearer than when we believed," "Looking for . . . the day of God," "Looking

for that blessed hope," "Them that look for Him," "To wait for his Son from heaven," "The day is at hand," are scattered through the New Testament, and do quite satisfactorily prove that an expectant condition was that inculcated in the Church, and for some time maintained. But to affirm that the early saints were taught to expect Jesus "daily," "from day to day," "at any moment," as stated in the "Remarks" (pp. 3, 5), is surely too strong a statement, nor is any quotation given which proves it. It is but a fallible inference from Divine dogmas which were purposely left vague. The writer argues that the expectation was to be "constant", from "the fact that it needed a *particular revelation* to individuals (such as to Paul and Peter) about their departure" (p. 6, note). But Jesus made the announcement to Peter in the presence of seven of the apostles, and John recorded it in his Gospel (John xxi. 18); so that this could scarcely have been a private revelation. And what was the announcement? That Peter should live to be "*old*"; which certainly was, as a matter of fact, between thirty and forty years; so that the apostles, and, I suppose, the Church generally, might know all that time that the Lord would not come till Peter was an old man, though still they would be waiting for Him (1 Thess. i. 10). Jesus said, too, on the same occasion, of John, "If I will that he tarry till I come—;" a reply which, from the very nature of the question asked, as well as from the thought latent in the word "tarry" (*μένειν*), conveyed the notion that it would be a long time first. And there are indubitably numerous predictions and promises, scattered over the Acts and

the Epistles, which must have been inconsistent with a belief that the Lord might come for his Church *at any day* in that age. Such are the following:—Paul's confidence that, after a circuitous journey necessarily of considerable duration, he must see Rome (Acts xix. 21); and stand before Cæsar (xxvii. 24); the future ravages of wolves in the Ephesian flock (xx. 29); Agabus's predictions of the coming famine (xi. 28—30), and of what should befall Paul at Jerusalem (xxi. 11); the apostasy of the latter times (1 Tim. iv. 1—3); the perilous times coming (2 Tim. iii. 1—5); the degeneration of seducers (iii. 13); and of the taught (iv. 3, 4); the damnable heresies, and their success (2 Pet. ii. 1—3); the coming of scoffers in the last days (iii. 3).<sup>\*</sup> It is true that some of these announcements did not necessarily look far ahead; some, perhaps, not more than a year: but they are apostolic, and are enough to show that it was *not* the habit of the earliest age of the Church to look for the return of the Lord so imminently, but that events might be known as necessarily to intervene.<sup>†</sup>

Again, the same writer says (p. 20), the signs in Matthew xxiv. "are indices to elect Jewish disciples of Christ's appearing." Supposing this were so (which I do not admit), Luke xxi. 28—36 is surely spoken to Christians, not to Jews, as Jews. I solemnly protest against the legerdemain which would interpret the

<sup>\*</sup> A then *future* event (ἐλεύσονται). The post-apostolic Church certainly looked for the fall of the Empire before the Advent; but then, it may be said, that was their increasing earthliness.

+ I do not press 2 Thessalonians ii. 3—7; not that I do not think it germane, but because its application to this dispensation is disputed.

“ye” and “you” and “your” of such a passage, in any other mode than as referring either to the individuals addressed, or to the body, separated and called out, of which they were the nucleus. There is not the shadow of a proof that the Lord Jesus ever addressed his apostles as representing a body of Jews other than the Church. But here are premonitory tokens of their *redemption*, to which they (and surely we) are expressly directed. So that there are, in fact, many indications that a series of events was to be expected before the Lord’s return; though I fully admit that the long duration of these was carefully concealed.\*

#### IX. COMPARATIVE USE OF THE INTERPRETATIONS.

It is a heavy charge against the Futurist interpretation, and one which cannot, I think, be readily evaded, that, notwithstanding the reiterated solemn commendation of the book to *the Churches* (i. 1, 3, 4; ii. 7; xxii. 6, 7, 10, 16, 18, 19), it is hereby so diminished and diluted in direct bearing upon, and interest for, the Church, as to be practically deprived of all life, energy and utility. Even on the hypothesis, in which not a few Futurists find refuge, of a twofold fulfilment, the one on the protracted historical scale, the other in a post-ecclesiastical crisis,—a coalition, in fact, of the distinctive principles of the second and third schools of interpreters in one,—a scheme which certainly appears to me to rest on no adequate basis; but even, I say, if

\* The chapter No. 12 in Mr. Trotter’s “Plain Papers” (pp. 221—240), presents the attitude of expectation in far more moderate terms. I have pleasure in expressing my concurrence with it, with scarcely an exception.

this hypothesis were admitted, it seems manifest that it is the present historical sense which we are mainly concerned to know, for the regulation of our own affections, walk and testimony. That such a sense has been honoured by the Holy Ghost is evident, and is confessed by some Futurists. Mr. Trotter, indeed, appears to think that if such antiquarian and historical research as has been of late years bestowed on the Revelation was needed, the book was of no avail to those who lived during the intervening centuries.\* But Mr. B. W. Newton, who rejects the Presentist sense even more absolutely still, allows† the value of the book to the saints of former ages. "I believe," he observes, "few things have been more marked in the history of the Church than this. Whenever they have made themselves the centre of their interests, and fixed their thoughts exclusively upon their own acceptance, or even their own comfort as saints, this book has been neglected; but whenever they have had more vigour of faith, or have been forced by circumstances into a place of testimony or service, they have used and valued the Revelation. It was used by the early Christians, whilst in testimony against Pagan Rome; by the Waldenses and the Reformers against the Papal abominations; and

\* *Lond. Mo. Review*, 1857, p. 548. He is professedly combating Mr. Elliott's principles. But of course Mr. Elliott never professed to have *originated* the historical scheme of interpretation; even the ignorance of "the very form and structure of the prophecy itself," which Mr. E. attributes to anterior expositions, did not imply ignorance of the canons of its interpretation, nor even of many details of fulfilment, in those symbols which he himself presumes to have been then fulfilled.

† "Thoughts on the Apocalypse," p. 6.

now . . . its value is again . . . beginning to be appreciated."

#### X. GRANDEUR OF THE SYMBOLS.

It is frequently contended that the things spoken of in the Revelation are of far too striking, too abnormal, too awful a character to be fulfilled only in such events as history records. Mr. Trotter presses this point in a passage of great force and eloquence, which will, I doubt not, carry the assent of a large number of readers. "Can it be," he asks, "that the predictions of the sixth seal have been fulfilled, and yet that it should have been, till lately, a difficult historical problem to decide what event constituted their fulfilment? Have the seven trumpets really sounded,—the three woe-trumpets included,—and are there yet wide differences of opinion, as to where or how the third part of trees was burned up, and *all green grass*? 'When did the third part of the sea become blood, and the third part of all the living creatures in it die? When were the third part of ships destroyed?' And with regard to the vials,—“How could we, any of us, if untrammelled by system, see in the political events, national convulsions, prolonged wars, and frequent revolutions, of the last seventy years, the outpouring of the seven vials, in which is *filled up* the wrath of God?" \*

I have said that these questions will to many minds seem unanswerable. And I freely acknowledge that they deserve the most careful consideration, and the fullest reply. Though, it is true, they cannot, like

\* *Lond. Mo. Rev.*, 1857, pp. 550, 552.



many questions, be answered definitely, by a statement of facts, being moral, and appealing to the judgment, yet they ought to be set at rest ; for I feel persuaded that the strength of Futurism mainly lies in an assumption implied in these questions. The love of the marvellous is a passion deeply seated in the human breast ; and it is a far more easy thing to persuade the multitude, little accustomed to logical accuracy and cautious investigation, and with a natural proclivity to superstition, to look for astounding interruptions and violations of natural laws in the symbols of the Revelation, than to trace therein the homely events of history, of which their knowledge is perhaps very dim and vague. Thus such a person as many brethren suppose the Antichrist will be,—a man (actually raised from the dead, say some) possessed of all Oriental magnificence, and all Occidental knowledge and taste ; wielding all the political power and all the martial strength of the world ; endowed with miraculous powers by Satan, and using them to make a statue of himself, which then has organic life and the functions of life ; claiming and receiving worship as being literally God ; uttering blasphemies so outrageous as to be without precedent ; persecuting with merciless fury, even to death, God's saints, *for three and a half years* ;—such a monstrous being as this would be, is really looked upon as being a far mightier manifestation of Satanic power and malice, than the Papacy with its blasphemous assumptions, its spiritual pride, its dejection into the dust of every glory of Christ, its idolatries, its sorceries, its thefts, its murders of millions on millions

for Jesus' sake, and all this protracted over a period of *twelve hundred years*. The mind is carried captive, and gazes with open mouth after the wild prodigy which imagination figures in the future, while it treats as mean and common-place that actual reality which lorded it unchallenged through the middle ages. Yet, perchance, Christ, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, judges not so.

We are apt to receive but feeble impressions from recorded calamities, far removed from us in time and place, particularly if the records be general, entering little into details. A graphically painted newspaper paragraph of a poor factory-girl drawn into the machinery of a mill, and torn limb from limb, harrows the feelings and dwells on the remembrance far more than a passage of no greater length in a historian, of a town sacked by a savage foe. Yet probably the latter really involves a thousand times more horrors than the former. The invasions of the Roman Empire by the barbarian hordes; the overrunning of the professing Christian world by the Saracens; and even the desolations of Europe in the Napoleonic wars,—these are but facts in history, which we read of at school, and which lie very lightly on our minds. But if we had been personal sufferers under these calamities; still more, if it had been possible for us to have been personally cognizant of all the myriad agonies of those desolations, even as God and the holy angels were, I am greatly mistaken, if we should not have thought them fully commensurate with the grandest and most awful imagery of the seals, or trumpets, or vials;—of

course, excepting that, which, on every hypothesis, is yet future, the War of the great day of God Almighty.

But the final appeal should always be, with believers, to the written Word. Do other Scriptures then give us any light on the degree of force intended to attach to such symbolic imagery? Surely they do. Let the candid reader turn to Isa. xiii. 9—13, and say whether the terms are not at least as intensely awful as any that occur in those parts of the Revelation which Presentists believe to be fulfilled. "The day of the Lord . . . cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate . . . The *stars* of heaven . . . *shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened* in his going forth, and *the moon* shall not cause her light to shine . . . I will *shake the heavens*, and the earth shall remove *out of her place*, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger." "Yes, but these terms," the reader will probably say, "have not been yet fulfilled; they belong to a judgment yet future." Nay; whatever glance there may be in them to that which is yet future, the whole prediction is expressly declared to show the overthrow of Babylon;—not an imaginary Babylon yet to be built by European resources, but the Babylon of the *Chaldees*, overthrown by the *Medes* (vv. 17, 19). Again in Jer. iv. 23, *et seq.* the prophet says, "I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. . . . For this shall the earth

mourn, and the heavens above be black," etc. What is the occasion of this vividly awful imagery? The destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar;—calamities produced by such very common-place agencies as chariots and horses (ver. 13), horsemen and bowmen (ver. 29), the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war (ver. 19), the sword (ver. 10) of the destroyer of the nations (ver. 7), coming from the north (ver. 6). Again, what a lofty symbolism is that used by Ezekiel in chap. xxxii! "I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and I will cause *all the fowls of the heaven* to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beasts of *the whole earth* with thee. I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimdest, *even to the mountains*; and *the rivers shall be full of thee*. And when I shall spue thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. And the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God. . . . Yea, I will make many peoples amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall *brandish my sword* before them; and they shall *tremble* at every moment, *every man for his own life*, in the day of thy fall." (vv. 4—10.) And what then the original from which this most graphic picture is pourtrayed? The invasion and desolation of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar;—neither less nor more. Is there any ground whatever to suppose that the horrors of these invasions and desolations were at all greater than, or of a different character

from, those which followed in the track of Attila or Napoleon? And may not the Allwise God, who had already employed such imagery to predict the earlier, employ the like to predict the later? I am sure many readers will take refuge in the assumption that these descriptions apply to scenes yet unfulfilled, and think that they can thus evade the force of this parallelism. But such an assumption is wholly irrelevant. Whether there be such a secondary fulfilment in each of these cases, I will not here discuss. The question is, Did the Holy Ghost intend to depict the overthrow of Babylon by the Medes, the siege of Jerusalem and the invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, under these images? Not, Did He mean to include certain *other* distant events, *also*, under the symbols? but, Did He describe *these*? Unless you can say No; (and few, I presume, will take such a ground as this,) the parallelism must be acknowledged, and the objection falls pointless to the ground.

#### XI. IS FULFILMENT NECESSARILY MANIFEST?

It is advanced as a canon of interpretation by many Futurist expositors, that a prophecy once fulfilled must be so *manifestly* fulfilled as to leave no doubt of its fulfilment. Therefore, it is argued, the diversity of interpretations of the Apocalypse held by Presentist expositors simply proves its non-fulfilment. But this canon is true only with some important qualifications: if the prophecy has been delivered in plain narrative language, and if the facts predicted are adequately known to the student, it must be admitted; if not, not. But the predictions of this

Book have been couched in language studiously enigmatical ; and the (assumed) fulfilments have occurred in ages, and in regions, of which our knowledge must necessarily be various in different students, and imperfect in all ; so that the application of the canon may reasonably be refused. Besides, it is not true, in point of fact. I should like to learn from any Futurist brother, believing the epistles to the Seven Churches to have a dispensational fulfilment, and rejecting, of course, the year-day computation,—When, and under what circumstances, the ten days' tribulation of Smyrna was accomplished. If he answer, I do not know the circumstances, but have no doubt it *was* fulfilled, I reply, Confidence is not knowledge ; you do not *know* that it was fulfilled at all ; you merely *take it for granted*. Mr. Elliott has asked Mr. Trotter to show *how* the sixty-nine weeks of Dan. ix., which the latter affirms to have been accomplished at the death of Christ, were fulfilled.\* Mark Mr. Trotter's answer, and see how far it bears out this supposed canon. "The ground on which I believe sixty-nine of Daniel's weeks to have been fulfilled at the death of Christ is the plain, unmistakable testimony of the passage itself. *I believe* the passage itself, which says, that after the close of the second of the three periods into which the seventy weeks are distributed—after 'the threescore and two weeks'—Messiah should be cut off. On the testimony of the Holy Ghost by the Evangelists, I believe that Christ died ; and if God's word in Dan. ix. be true, I know that sixty-nine of Daniel's weeks had then expired."† I am sure the writer of this paragraph

\* *Lond. Mo. Review*, 1857, p. 464.

† *Ibid.* p. 549.

was one who walked with God, and would not have given a consciously evasive answer: he would not willingly have thrown dust in our eyes: but yet I cannot but wonder that so astute a reasoner should not have seen that this was quite beside the question. For the point was, not whether Messiah was really *cut off*, according to the prophecy, but whether He was cut off *after sixty-two weeks*, according to the prophecy. The former point, indeed, is definitely settled by the testimony of the Evangelists: He was cut off; and so far the prediction was fulfilled. But of the latter point, *whether the time corresponded*, the Evangelists say not one word. Mr. Trotter says, however, "If God's word be true, I know that the weeks had expired." But this is not *knowing*; it is *taking for granted*. If God had not meant that the accurate fulfilment of the specified period should be an important evidence, both of his own prescience and of the Messiahship of Jesus, would He have sent Gabriel expressly to tell Daniel the details of the seventy weeks? Here, then, is a prediction (*viz.* of the defined time) which Mr. Trotter owns to have been fulfilled, but he confesses he knows not how. He takes refuge in the mere veracity of the Predictor. Here, then, is an example of a prediction certainly fulfilled, whose fulfilment is by no means *manifest*.

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## XII. RECAPITULATION.

Thus I have endeavoured to array before the thoughtful Christian some elements which appear to me of weight in the decision of the great question, How must

the Revelation be interpreted? There remain, indeed, some, of cardinal importance, such as the nature and duration of the Great Tribulation; the personal or dynastic character of the Wild Beast; and the literal or symbolic computation of time;—which I reserve for separate examination, if God so will. I have striven also to weigh the arguments of those who have formed a different conclusion from my own, honestly and fairly; not consciously concealing or evading any, but, on the other hand, earnestly searching for the very strongest that could be advanced for that hypothesis. For my aim is not victory, but truth.

What, then, is the result? For the aid of my reader, I will briefly recapitulate the points which I have sought to establish.

1. The Revelation is specifically sent to Christ's *servants*, which must have then meant the Church (See *ante*, p. 6); to whom, indeed, it would have possessed little interest or value, if it had not depicted their own destiny (pp. 8, 43).

2. The command *not to seal* it suggests a nearness of fulfilment, which did not attach to the predictions of Daniel (p. 10).

3. While "the things which are" are confessedly the Seven Churches, there is no sufficient ground for understanding their conditions to have been prophetic (p. 12). On the other hand, the seven candlesticks of gold, one in each city, depicted a condition which marked the Gentile Churches during that brief period exclusively (p. 16).

4. The scene in which the Church is presented under



certain symbols, in heaven (chaps. iv. and v.), cannot indicate an actual condition yet future, but one long since past; because in it the Sealed Book was actually opened, and remains open (p. 19).

5. The "saints", whose testimony and sufferings constitute the chief subject of the book, cannot be a (supposed) Jewish Remnant; for they witness to Jesus as the Christ, and know the power of his blood (p. 25). They do not exercise vengeance, nor even cry for it; but are taught to expect it at God's hand (p. 27). They are distinctly identified with the proper Bride of the Lamb (pp. 32—36). They are therefore the Church.

6. The crucial test of prophetic interpretation being the agreement of the prophecy with events, in their respective nature, moment, order, and totality, this agreement is found to bear the strictest scrutiny on the Presentist hypothesis (p. 42); while, on the Futurist, we are wholly debarred from using the test (p. 45).

7. Futurism is consequently defective in practical energy on the people who now possess the prophecy (p. 50); while Presentism has borne blessed fruit to God, in those who believed the prophecy to be fulfilling during the past ages (p. 51).

In reply to the objections which have been urged to such a historical fulfilment, I have endeavoured to show, that—

1. The heavenly aspect of the Church, while gladly admitted, does not at all preclude her having earthly aspects, which may well be the subject of detailed prophecy (p. 4).

2. The Jewish symbolism of the book certainly can-

not indicate an actual Jewish condition in *some* cases, and therefore needs not in *any* (p. 8).

3. The Divine titles and relations being judicial, may well consist with the present providential government of God on the Throne, and of the Lord Christ, as Head of all principality and power (p. 21).

4. History, being a record, not of men's opinions, but of events which God, in providence, has brought to pass, so far from being useless, is of the highest value in understanding the accomplishments of prophecy (p. 38).

5. The discrepancies of Presentist expositors, while inevitable from the very conditions of the problem, are heavily counterbalanced by their essential agreement in the points of greatest weight; an agreement which has increased with the lapse of the ages (p. 46).

6. The notion, that no events could be at any time known with certainty, as to intervene between the then present moment, and the return of the Lord, is proved by very many passages of Holy Scripture to be quite erroneous (p. 48).

7. On the contrary, certain events antecedent to, and monitory of, his appearing were given to disciples, who could not represent any then future body, except the Church (p. 49).

8. The notion, that no events yet accomplished in this dispensation adequately answer to the awful grandeur of the symbols, has been proved to be erroneous by several Holy Scriptures, in which language of equal intensity has been shown, on the authority of inspiration, to apply to exactly similar events (p. 55).

9. The actual fulfilment of a Divine prediction is not

necessarily patent even to spiritual persons, after it has occurred ; unless under certain conditions, which do not exist in the present case (p. 57).

### XIII. CONCLUSION.

For all these reasons, then (to omit for the present those which are to be considered hereafter), which are cumulative in their weight, I hold, and do earnestly press on the conviction of my readers, that the Revelation was given to describe those aspects of the Church's history, and of the relations to her of Satan, as the god of this world, and the grand issue of the whole, beginning from the age then existent,—which the all-wise God saw to have the most direct bearing on her faith, affections, and practice, and on his own glory. And surely I need not say to any dear believer, to whom these reasons appear cogent, how solemn are the conclusions to which they come. If the Presentist interpretation is true, then the whore of Babylon is just on the verge of her doom ; the vials are nearly all poured out ; the Church's tribulation is almost ended ; and the Lord whom we love may *at any moment* descend to the air, snatch his dead and living ones to meet Him ; and resurrection glory, and bridal joy, and denizenship in the Holy City, and session on the Throne of the Lamb, be ours for ever and ever.

O blessed, cheering, purifying Hope ! O joyful consummation ! O rapturous sight of Jesus ! What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness !

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