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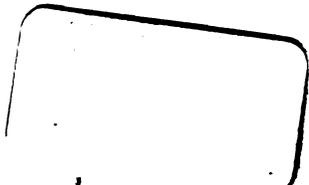
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The Apocalypse.



A Dissertation Thereon.

THE APOCALYPSE.

A DISSERTATION THEREON.

BY
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PREFACE.

SO many books have been written on the Apocalypse, so many have appeared of late years that the present volume may seem uncalled for, yet as I have ventured upon a path but little trodden, not so much an explanation of symbols, nor a defence of particular views, nor an attack upon other schools of interpretation as a presentation of the glories of Christ in relation to His church both now and hereafter, and the glorious inheritance which awaits His saints, I venture to hope that even for this there may be a place. Feeble indeed and disappointing to the writer, and doubtless also to the reader, as this presentation may be, yet if the pulsations of the heart of one of His own toward Himself are quickened thereby, the work, defective as it surely is, will be remembered in eternity although forgotten in time.

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INTRODUCTION.

T has pleased God to speak to His creature man in many ways, and through various mediums. Instruments of the most diverse character have been used, and the communications have been as varied as the instruments.

The Holy Spirit's inspiration has come at times upon kings, and upon shepherds ; upon warriors and upon women ; upon the learned and the unlearned ; and while the character of the vessel has remained unchanged, impressing its mental peculiarities upon the utterances ; those utterances have been the expression of the mind of God, whether given in the rude language of a herdman, or in the lofty poetical imagery of cultivated minds ; thus making together a complete and harmonious whole—a blessed book—our bible.

If then God has given us a revelation of His mind in counsel and purpose, it must be in immutable statements ; and if He has given instructions for our governance, there can be no qualification of them. If He has concealed from us many things which we might

desire to enquire into, and given us only a partial knowledge of others which but increases the desire to know more, He is sovereign and acts from Himself, for He has no counsellor.

We know the existence of evil, but who can explain its toleration. We are told by revelation of the persons comprising the Godhead, but who can comprehend it. We have seen the mystery of godliness in incarnation, but who can know the Son, or explain the holy union.

We know nothing beyond our sphere ; nothing before the creation of the world ; nothing after its destruction, nor indeed beyond the existing moment, except by revelation ; and if before accepting the divine record we require an authentication of it, or by analysis such internal confirmation as will satisfy our natural minds, we are blind to our lost condition, and insensible to our need of a revelation.

God has spoken to man ; spoken unmistakably by His word, the inspired scriptures of truth ; and man is responsible to accept implicitly the divine communications. Herein then lies the conflict between faith and reason. Faith accepts what God has said, simply because He has said it ; accepts statements which traverse the deductions of reason, and then finds them confirmed to the soul by a confirmation immeasurably

beyond anything that reason could establish ; whereas reason asks, how a thing can possibly have been, which conflicts with the laws of nature ; yet the One who gave the laws, can surely arrest, or change them, without consequences that reason would consider inevitable.

If the mental activity which is so marked a characteristic of the present time, has led some to a rejection of the true, and to an acceptance of the false ; it has also led others into a fuller knowledge of the scriptures of truth, and to firmer establishment therein ; and thus we see that God, who is infinite in wisdom, and who moves and acts unseen by the world, is providentially allowing every development of the age ; every tendency of the human mind ; all the shifting and changing circumstances of life, both to accelerate the progress of evil until it is fully manifested, and unmitigated judgment descends upon the vessels of wrath who have fitted themselves to destruction ; as well as for the accomplishment of His purposes of grace, in making known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory. And if the activity and restlessness of unbelief has exhausted every source from which the shafts of infidelity have been drawn, confirming and hardening itself in the process ; at the same time the word of

truth has only the more established other souls in the simplicity of a God-given faith.

But the processes of human reasonings are completely at fault when applied to the apocalypse, for here it is indeed apparent that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." Furthermore, the Devil hinders, as much as he is able, a knowledge of the book, and confuses its interpretation; for herein is recorded his doom; the doom of his master-piece the mystic Babylon; and that also of the civil power which will be especially energised by him.

THE APOCALYPSE.

A DISSERTATION THEREON.

CHAPTER I.

This is the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him, and it is the same beloved apostle who in the gospel which the Holy Spirit had given him to write, there maintains that the Word is God, who here presents Him as receiving a revelation from God. But the scriptures are accurately perfect. The Son of man is about to judge a guilty race, and to purge out of His kingdom every offensive thing. A book of judgment is before us, and the Judge receives the communication.

The blessed Lord is presented to us in many aspects, in order that our finite minds may more fully apprehend the glory of His Person, and the perfection of His work. How innumerable are the shadowy presentations of Him in the old testament; and how blessed the unfoldings of His moral glories, as the various offerings; the altars; the incense; and the candle-stick come before us; deepening and expanding our apprehension of Himself; increasing our joy and

strengthening our faith. But all this was anticipative, and if we look back to see what God's thoughts were of the blessed One who in the fulness of time was coming to do His will, it is to have with deeper interest our wondering gaze turned again upon an Object of such transcendent glory that those heavenly citizens whose voices are inaudible to the grosser natures of men, and whose angelic forms are invisible to us, suddenly assume shape and give expression to their heavenly joy in shouts of praise, as their Creator is manifested in human form.

The gospels give us the narrative of His journey across the stage of this world, and although rejected and crucified by His unbelieving creatures, He was none other than God manifested in human flesh, and now the occupant of the throne of heaven.

The apostle sends his salutation to the seven churches in Asia, a mystical and figurative number, and limited to a proconsular province in Asia Minor. Grace and peace ; how blessed the association. We know that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, but He is Himself "the truth," and truth is not measurable or by degrees ; it is absolute. The fathers knew Him that was from the beginning, and the second word to them is but a reiteration of the first ; but grace is ministered in the ratio of its apprehension ;

“ He giveth more grace ;” and peace is of various significance, whether it be peace of conscience by the work of the cross, which is not in view here ; or the peace, His peace, which He left with His disciples, and gave to them, not as the world giveth ; a peace, a rest of soul obtained through bearing His yoke ; or that peace of God, which if to us incomprehensible, can yet garrison our hearts and minds.

And with whom is the apostle joined in this salutation ? With Him who in the past had been known by the name of “ The Same,” the self-existing and unchangeable One ; with the perfection of spiritual energy, and that in connection with the throne, a throne of judgment ; and with Jesus Christ who is here presented in three aspects of progressive order. A faithful witness on earth for God, indeed the faithful witness, for there had never been another ; the first in order of those who should enter into a new character of life ; and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Not yet King of kings as having taken the kingdom, but the One by whom “ kings reign, and princes decree justice.” Does this presentation of our adorable Saviour touch a responsive chord in the heart of the reader ? It is supposed to do so, but alas ! how many christian readers look at this picture as they would at the figures cast by a camera with which they have no

concern, and that the ones who interrupt the sacred record were John's cotemporaries, or some-one else, it matters not much whom, who could say He loved them, had washed them from their sins in His blood, and had made them a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father. Ah! it is not that He loved some one, at some distant past time; it is the present tense, He loveth us, His redeemed ones, with an unchangeable, unending love; a love which many waters cannot quench; a love which ever works to the accomplishment of His blessed purposes of grace which will soon find its satisfaction in the presentation to Himself of a bride, a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish.

There is however another side to this picture; there are those who have not been washed in the blood of the Lamb, and who are not ready to accord to Him glory and dominion to the ages of ages, and yet they shall see Him, every eye shall see Him, but it will be like the wicked prophet of old who said, "I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh;" it will indeed be to such the "dies irae" of which the poets have written. At the announcement of His first coming Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. Why? A king was to come whose reign was to be a reign of righteousness; the

self-convicted subjects shrank from His rule. A refiner and purifier of silver was to sit, but who could abide the day of His coming, or stand when He appeared. When He comes again it will be with clouds, accompanied by myriads of His saints, and all kindreds shall wail because of Him. Many are brave when danger is remote, whose faces blanch, and whose knees knock together when it is present; and many speak lightly of the impending judgments, whose terror will know no bounds, when they see coming from heaven the Executor of them.

But now He who is coming declares Himself. He is not only the Alpha and Omega, which names might be limited to time, but the Jehovah, the Elohim, the Shaddai of the old testament. It is God who speaks.

John was the brother and companion of those who were, and should be, in the tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus. A kingdom whose king is absent, as England for instance when her sovereign was confined in an Austrian prison, is abnormal. The time would come when the thrones would be set up, and the saints possess the kingdom; now it was the period of their endurance; the kingdom is in mystery, and the mysteries are revealed to those with whom the secret of the Lord is. The brother is

in exile on two accounts ; and here, as in many places elsewhere, there is not only man's side, but God's side above it. If faithfulness to the word of God had made him a prisoner, the testimony of Jesus which is the spirit of prophecy required that the Lord's servant should be, as to his circumstances and surroundings, in a position to render that testimony. And furthermore he was in the Spirit and it was the Lord's day ; how blessed the association. The Holy Spirit of truth leads into all truth, and now it is for us the truth in connection with resurrection, it is the Lord's day ; but if the period is that, there is more particularly the first day of the week which has been marked out as a new order by virtue of His resurrection, apart altogether from Jewish associations, for on the sabbath the blessed One who had gone down under the burden of our sins was in the tomb. Man could be religious apart from the Author and Completer of faith, and with a strange misapprehension of the difference between law and grace, many now speak of the "christian sabbath," but the observance of the sabbath was annulled by the One who gave it, as indeed was all the system to which it attached, for Christ was the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, and the Lord's day is not in any scriptural sense a sabbath, yet a sabbathism.

remains for the people of God. For those who are to people the renewed earth that day is about to break ; the day when the heavenly saints shall enter into theirs, shall precede it ; while for still another company, who are saying peace and safety, the day of the Lord, that awful day of judgment, comes upon them as a thief.

The apostle hears behind him a great voice as of a trumpet, saying : What thou seest write in a book, and send unto the seven churches ; to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, to Laodicea. But why seven ? Why these seven ? What about Hierapolis, Colosse, Antioch, and others of seemingly more importance than some of these ?

How many dear saints of God for nearly nineteen hundred years have rejoiced in the promises to overcomers, or have been exercised by the warnings contained in these epistles to the churches, stupidly, as some would think, appropriating what had been given to others ; but simple faith is often far beyond intelligence. No doubt a state of things actually existed in the several churches indicated, and that the warnings and encouragements were very real and applicable to them, but remembering that seven fold presentations in scripture are indicative of fullness or

completion ; that the epistles themselves give a complete and perfect representation of the church's history in seven successive stages from the beginning of declension even in apostolic times, until the Lord's coming again ; that the last four churches have this coming presented to them ; that all are developed consecutively, while the last four run on, as one after another is brought into view, concurrently to the end ; and that at the present time these are seen about us ; who can honestly question the fact that the Holy Spirit is, in these two chapters, pourtraying the downward course of a profession which in the end is spued out of the Lord's mouth. Remove one, or change the order and it would cease to be what it is, the church's history in the world. Furthermore, as the church was ever to have before her the thought and the hope of the Lord's coming, anything that removed or deferred that hope would be inconsistent with the whole of the teaching of the new testament where the Holy Spirit is continually occupied with it in all His ministry, in order that the affection of the bride should ever be kept burning brightly as she daily listened for the foot-fall of the One to whom she was espoused. Alas ! that the world, by presenting a counter, and present attraction, meretricious indeed but effective, should first have dulled and then

destroyed this blessed hope, leading captive the chaste virgin espoused to Christ, until the thought of His return for her became distasteful, then irritating, then wholly rejected, so that we can look back over the course now about terminating, and see, what those entering upon it were not permitted to see, that the purposes of God were to be accomplished on earth in His saints by all the vicissitudes and testings through which they were to be passed, the reason for which will one day be made known, to the inexpressible joy of Wisdom's children by whom Wisdom is now justified. They were to comfort one another with the words of His coming ; a comfort which after the death of Peter became a living and present hope, which should have extended all down the ages, and is now again brightly revived as we find ourselves in the midst of the marked characteristics which were to accompany the end. The epistles to the churches have then these three-fold applications ; to the particular assemblies addressed ; to individual saints ; and to the professing church at large. The first and second will perhaps not be questioned, the third will be more apparent as we proceed.

When the apostle had turned, what a vision met his astonished gaze ! The exile of Patmos no longer looked away towards the country from which he was

now excluded, where dwelt his beloved children to whom he had so affectionately written. The little island was suddenly transformed into a scene of glory, and "the disciple whom Jesus loved" saw his Master again, but in a character so different from that in which he had known Him in the past that he falls at His feet as dead. He sees indeed seven golden candlesticks, but he merely chronicles the fact without particulars. Nothing about the form or shape of the lamp-stands, or the brilliancy of the lights. In the history of the tabernacle the beautiful workmanship of the seven branched candlestick is minutely described. Ah! that was Christ lighting His saints in the sanctuary, and there, rightly enough, we have the knops and the flowers and the beaten work, but here it is the separate responsibility of the churches where the appointment being divine and complete is golden and seven in number, yet the One who walks among the candlesticks is there in judgment, for judgment begins at the house of God, and the state is such that only two of the seven are free from blame. But if the candlesticks are not described, merely their presence recorded, we are given to see in a three-fold presentation, and each presentation in a three-fold character, the glory of the One who is like unto the Son of man.

The three characteristics in the first presentation

are rather of a personal application ; His garment, His girdle, and the hair of His head. The priestly robes remind us of the place He has taken for us on high, and if, after the order of Melchisedec, it is unending and unchangeable, it is also intercessory, Aaronic. But the garment flows down to the feet. He is not here in the exercise of that office for which His suffering had fitted Him, yet having been made a perfect and merciful high priest He never ceases to be so, whatever other relationship He may take as to His saints.

The breast, the heart, we know is spoken of metaphorically as the seat of the affections ; and He is girt about the breasts with a golden girdle. Ah ! His affections are within the circle of divine righteousness, not as ours, often set on that which attracts naturally, while regardless of the transformations which grace has wrought elsewhere on that which had been unlovely and unattractive.

Finally His head and His hair are like white wool, white as snow. Daniel the prophet had seen such an One in a vision six hundred years before, and now we learn that the Ancient of days whom he then saw, was none other than the One whom John saw in his vision, and that One none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now the second group speaks to us of something else. If the first was personal these are judicial.

He had eyes as a flame of fire ; feet like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ; and a voice as the sound of many voices of waters. Some rays of light may be so controlled and directed as even to penetrate opaque bodies, but those eyes see the working of the heart, the thoughts of the mind. All things are plain and opened to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do ; and if the eyes search out the secret things, they are those of the One who is walking in inflexible and burning judgment, and whose judgment is declared in a voice of overwhelming majesty.

It well becomes, not only the church collectively, but also the individual saint to consider what the Lord is looking for in His own, and if we are in any measure fulfilling His holy requirements. Alas that the word of God which has been given as a lamp to the feet and a light to the path should be so much disregarded, its plainest injunctions set aside as applying to some one else or to other times, and individual judgment taking its place, with, I think this, or I think that, wholly regardless of what God has said, although He has spoken in tones which should arrest the most careless and compel attention.

But if judgment begins at the house of God how awful the fate of the Christ rejectors will be when in the presence of those eyes as a flame of fire ; that holy

and unchanging judgment ; and in hearing of that voice which will shake both heaven and earth, they will be condemned to endure the wrath of God forever ; shut up in the gloomy caverns of the damned, where mercy never comes, wherein no ray of hope ever enters, but where the gnawings of remorse, and the unquenchable flame, call forth from the unhappy objects of divine wrath, a response of this awful character ; weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Oh ! God grant that the reader's voice be not one of those that come up from that pit of despair.

Finally there is the official relationship, the seven stars in His right hand ; the sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of His mouth, and His countenance as the sun shining in its strength. The last verse of our chapter explains the mystery of the seven stars, they are the angels of the churches. When we now speak of angels no other thought is suggested than that of spiritual beings, but not so the word of God, or the meaning of the word as then understood. John sent messengers to the Lord to know if He was the One who should come, and the word adds, " now when the angels of John had departed " ; and the Lord's words as to little children are well known, " their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. " They are clearly then the representatives, and so the

seven in question here. Their responsibility is to reflect the light which has shone down upon them, but as subordinate to the One in whose hand they are. The sharp two-edged sword does not present any difficulty as scripture elsewhere speaks of it as the word of God, both living and powerful, dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow, so that that voice is not only of overwhelming majesty and power, but the words are irresistible in their effect. Furthermore, His face shone as the sun, and thus He appeared when on the holy mount as the head of both the heavenly and earthly company He manifested to the disciples the coming glory of a future age.

When the old testament prophet had seen a vision similar to the one we have recorded in this chapter, he fainted and an angel strengthened him ; when the new testament prophet sees the vision and falls as dead, the right hand of the Lord is laid upon him for strength and encouragement ; the One who became dead but was now alive to the ages of ages ; the One who for the glory of God and our salvation had gone down into death and hades, but who was now risen in triumph, bearing with Him the keys of the strong man's fortresses whom He had bound and whose goods He had despoiled ; write therefore, He says, because of this, the vision which thou hast now seen, the

things which are continuing, and those which are about to be after these. If this three-fold division of the book of the revelation were a human suggestion, it would be open to question, and might be discarded ; but when it is that of the Lord Himself, it does not admit of question ; it is indeed the key which unlocks it all, which some having failed to see have been landed in the greatest obscurity and doubt. Images and figures are used throughout the book which no one would be likely to assert that they had the only true interpretation of, as witness the number of the beast ; yet the scope and purport of the prophecy are clearly outlined in the three-fold division referred to.

There are then seven stars, seven candlesticks, seven angels, and seven churches ; but the stars are the angels, the candlesticks are the churches, and soon we shall see how the angels and the churches coalesce.

CHAPTER II.

The epistles to the churches contain such an amazing wealth of divine unfoldings; altitudes so immeasurable; depths so profound, that it seems temerity indeed to undertake to write anything on such a subject; but the servant to-day has the same blessed Master that the apostle had, and whatever the weakness and incapacity of the vessel, He is able to make His grace abound in inciting some, thereby, to a more diligent study of scriptures which present His glory in so varied, and in such brilliant colors.

“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write.” Thirty years earlier another apostle, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit could address them directly, and not as here through a representative, “as the saints which are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus.” Then the assembly at Ephesus was in such happy relationship with its risen and glorified Head, that the purposes and counsels of God could be exposed as no where else. There they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. There they were seen as raised up together with Him and seated in Him in the heavenlies, after having been sealed with the Holy

Spirit of promise. There was made known the mystery which had been hid in God from the foundation of the world ; showing to the heavenly principalities and powers, the manifold wisdom of God displayed in the church, and there the church was seen as the bride of Christ. Alas ! it had become a fallen church ; it had left its first love, and as the intimate relationship of reciprocal affection had waned, a communication could now only be made to it through its representative.

The reader will remark the general character of the first epistle. He who speaks is the One who holds in His right hand the seven stars ; the One who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. He who hath an ear is to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches ; and the promise to the overcomer is of no limited application. Is not this of itself the clearest evidence that in its application the epistle goes beyond the assembly gathered at Ephesus, while at the same time describing an existing state of things ? This double application is continually found in the word of God. After the descent of the Holy Ghost at pentecost, His energy through individuals was so marked that Peter could speak of it as that of which the prophet Joel had spoken, which was to characterise a period still future, and clearly so, as the co-incident wonders are yet unfulfilled.

The declension of the churches had set in before the apostles had passed off the scene, a decline which although checked for a time by the persecution of the Smyrna period, has continued to the present, and shortly when relieved of the restraining power which now hinders, will have its downward course increased to fearful rapidity, and finally be destroyed by the world power it has courted and controlled. But there is this to be remembered. The vast company of unbelieving professors known as the church has in its midst a smaller company—true believers, and these only compose the church as seen of God, so that they are the preservative element which at the Lord's coming are, together with the Holy Spirit, taken away, yet it is true believers, whose love has grown cold, who are called upon to repent; and it is false professors, and they only, who are spued out of the Lord's mouth.

What grace it is that here and elsewhere whatever is commendable is first recounted. There were works, and labour and endurance, but while these continued, and credit was given for them, the reproof which an omission contains is most solemn. The spring, the motive power which, in the Lord's eyes gives most value to any service for Him, is here lacking. It was not as in the case of the Thessalonians; works of

faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ ; and we may well ask, how much of the thessalonian character is stamped upon the activity we see about us at the present time. If every element of service were eliminated but that which has its source in personal devotion to the Lord Jesus, as one day indeed it will be, how much of all we see and perhaps often admire would be destroyed, nay, how little would be left. Indeed the covering is often so thin of what assumes to be "work for the Master" that like a lady's photograph taken in hat and veil, the linaments beneath the gauze are more noticeable because of the slight effort at concealment. The Lord is not honoured in the building up of a party, or in the glorification of an individual.

Yet there was much to commend. The ephesian period was a very brief one ; it hardly extended beyond the life time of individuals who had heard apostolic ministry, and the declension, although rapid, had not destroyed the spiritual perceptions of a happier and more devoted state. They could detect and judge evil, they could reject false apostolic assumption, and manifest an unwearied endurance for His name's sake ; yet it was a fallen church, she had left her first love, and repentance was the only avenue by which she could be re-instated in that happy place of mutual

confidence and communion. She had been left here by her Lord to be a light for Him in His absence, to reflect His glory ; if she was not doing this, what value was the candlestick ? it would be removed.

But there was another qualification which had not perhaps been brought into active exercise and so not included in the commendatory list ; but the One before whose eye the thoughts and intents of the heart are laid bare, saw how the evil principle was hated and possibly hindered from manifestation, and credit was given for it.

When the blessed Lord speaks of the works of the nicolaitanes as being hateful to Him, we turn at once to see the people whose deeds have such a sweeping and awful condemnation, but we see no one. We examine patristic writings for their history, but the fathers are silent. We search the scriptures again ; but, that the hateful thing had taken root in Pergamos, there is no further reference to it. Our last resource is to look at this epistle to Ephesus in the language in which it was written, and there we find the explanation in a way that removes all difficulty. It reads thus : “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the vanquishers of the people, which I also hate.”

There were there those who were ready to forge the manacles which afterwards bound the people hand

and foot in spiritual bondage ; and so, easily led captive by the devil at his will through priestly domination, the conquered people, having become so by a gradual and almost insensible progress, surrendered to their spiritual advisers the responsibility for the salvation of their souls, with the result, that a moral darkness settled down upon the people professing the name of Christ for a long period of many centuries until the Spirit of God again brought to light the blessed fact of individual relationship with God through faith in a crucified Saviour.

The appeal to hear the words of the Spirit to those who have ears, precedes the promise to the overcomer here, in Smyrna, and in Pergamos—while in Thyatira, in Sardis, in Philadelphia, and in Laodicea, the order is reversed. That is to say, in the former case the appeal is to a corporate condition, while in the latter it is individual.

When the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden six thousand years ago, He set in the midst of the garden two trees : the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man having partaken of the latter through disobedience, was shut out from the former ; and after these thousands of years have rolled their course, this tree, and this only, makes its appearance again, but not with earthly surroundings, however

delightful naturally, but in the paradise of God. No cherubims are there with flaming swords to guard the approaches to that tree now, but the happy overcomer sits down under its shadow with great delight and partakes freely of the heavenly fruit. Later on in this blessed book we find that it bears twelve manner of fruits, and that the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. We who have been born again by the operation of the Holy Spirit know that Christ is our life, and those who will be so happy as to have part in millennial blessing will prove indeed the fulfilment of the prophecy which says, that "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses."

When the Lord Jesus addresses the angel of the church at Smyrna it is under another character than that of the Holder of the seven stars as in Ephesus where He walks among the candlesticks, but everything to strengthen and encourage; and the encouragement and strengthening are exactly the same as ministered to the beloved disciple when the heavenly vision burst upon him, and he fell at the Lord's feet as dead. There is no reproof given to Smyrna, and the commendation is negative rather than positive. There are no works spoken of, merely tribulation and poverty, but if poor in this world they were rich in Christ. They were a heavenly people in a community that

desired to make their city an attractive centre for heathen festivities, and they were not wanted where their separation from it all, not only condemned the rites, but in so far, prevented their full success. They were persecuted, although for a limited period, and wherever there is faithfulness to Christ, in some way the one who has that name called upon him will be made to realize that he is not of this world even as his Master was not.

The state into which the church of God had fallen at the close of the apostolic period was a deplorable one, and if unchecked would end at length in giving up even the outward semblance of that which already had ceased inwardly. It must be stopped, but how?

In the distant past, far back in eternity, God had created one being far exceeding all others in beauty, in wisdom, and in power; "every precious stone was his covering," indeed he is said to have "filled up the sum," but his heart, because of all this, being lifted up in pride, he fell into condemnation, and was cast down from his high estate. Thenceforth he became the embodiment of every evil and hateful principle which found manifestation in opposing his Creator, and in attacking His creatures. Restrained by divine power from the accomplishment of most of his wicked purposes, he is yet allowed just so much liberty of

action as to work out, it may be unwillingly and unwittingly, the holy will of God, as with Job, as with Peter, and many others. Now, this wicked spirit works through human instrumentality in various ways, yet the word of God declares, "He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain." He would cast of them into prison; they were to suffer; they were to be tried; they were to have tribulation ten days, and after it was all over, a crown of life awaited them.

While the annals of christian martyrdom are filled with the record of the cruel persecutions, the sufferings, and the deaths of the children of God, from apostolic times down to a period almost modern, the tribulation of the dear saints of the Smyrna epoch was limited in duration to the reigns of ten roman emperors, making ten distinct persecutions from that of Nero in A.D. 64 to that of Diocletian, which did not cease at his death, but was prosecuted by Galerius, a Cæsar of his appointment for five years after.

"Ye shall have tribulation ten days."

Three thousand years after the giving of this epistle, death and hades are to deliver up the dead that are in them, and these are to be cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. The overcomer in Smyrna, the overcomer now, will not be affected by it;

but who can imagine ; what mind can conceive, the awful character of that resurrection as the innumerable millions of the unjust from the creation down, rise again to receive their final sentence, and to be banished to their eternal doom. Men whose names are infamous even upon the page of profane history will be there ; there also will be their victims ; those as powerless to vent their rage, as the other to obtain their deeply desired revenge. But in that vast company of two hundred generations there will be not only the desperately wicked ; there will also be, from every age, from every clime, from every race, from every creed ; the gentle, the cultivated, the courteous, the intellectual, and the refined ; men whose writings have been read with delight ; women whose graces have adorned the society of their day. Refinement, culture, and intellectual attainments, will there have no rating. The daughter of a hundred earls will have no better place than the child of the poorest peasant. All who have despised the grace of God will be reduced to one dead level of rank and be cast into the lake of fire. How amazing that any soul should go on deliberately, determinedly, desperately to a fate so clearly exposed, when the remedy, the place of safety, has been provided at incalculable cost, and all invited to avail themselves of it.

To the angel of the church in Pergamos write ; and how solemn the message as it came from One out of whose mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. The city itself had risen to opulence and splendour exceeding all other cities in Asia. It was the centre for all that was attractive in the arts, in learning and in religion. It had attained its eminence through wealth entrusted to one who betrayed his trust, and founded therewith a famous house. But there was this about Pergamos, that while other cities had their own deities which they worshipped ; in the world-renowned grove at Pergamos were temples to almost every god, worshipped by any known people. Satan had indeed set his throne there in a very marked way, and the saints of God were dwelling there ! Dwellers are those who have become fixtures, in contrast to sojourners or travellers ; and such was Lot in Sodom, such the saints of Pergamos. Had they forgotten a word of warning uttered centuries before : " Arise ye, and depart ; for this is not your rest ; because it is polluted." They could hold fast His name and not deny His faith, but that was very different from keeping His word. Not denying the faith is negative ; keeping His word ; not His words merely ; is positive. Still how blessed it is to find that in the midst of the unhappy surroundings at Pergamos, there was the

word of encouragement for the overcomer ; but the rewards promised are in marked keeping with their position ; they were both secret in character ; hidden links with the Lord ; not open and manifest.

How dangerous it is for the individual saint to be in the midst of surroundings, such as those in which the assembly at Pergamos was. It is impossible to breathe a vitiated atmosphere, and not have the healthful tone of the system lowered thereby. It is also impossible for a child of God to be in a position of continual intercourse with evil and the moral sensibilities not be affected by it. Separation is a divine principle ; union is a human expedient. Israel was separated from the nations. The church is called out from the world ; the word *ecclesia*, indicates that ; nor does scripture make a distinction between the christian world, and the wicked world, which we hear of in modern times. All that is in the world is not of the Father but of the world ; and Christ died to redeem us from this present evil world. Much is said too of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, the bible says : " In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." The great effort of the world as directed by Satan, is, that all lines should be obliterated, and that the christian should become a part of that world which is soon to be judged. Ought

not good people to come into all that is going on, and help to elevate and improve the world? But human thoughts traverse here, as elsewhere, divine principles, and so the prophet, as led by the Spirit of God, could say : " My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."

The Pergamos era is in marked contrast to that of Smyrna which precedes it. The bitter persecution which had continued for two hundred and fifty years, with varying intensity, came to an abrupt conclusion. The one into whose hands the empire of the world now passed, and who governed it in the interest of its god and prince, became at first the patron and then the head of the professing church. Naturally, it was an agreeable change for the saints ; and released from their hiding places in the catacombs and elsewhere, they disposed themselves to take advantage of the royal favors which began to be showered upon them ; they became dwellers in the very place where Satan's throne was. The occupant of that throne whom the world has styled, the great, after having put to death everyone who stood in the way of his ambition, or excited his jealousy, was finally baptized for the remission of his sins on his death-bed, professing the arian belief, which, inasmuch as it rejects the divine declaration of the eternal sonship of Christ, rejects the only

efficient Saviour. The word of God which had been the sheet anchor of the faith of the saints during a period of persecution, was losing its power over them as they emerged into a serener atmosphere which was clear of cloud or storm. There was not so much felt need for its blessed guidance, where there were not so many dangers and difficulties to be surmounted ; but the One who speaks is the Bearer of the two-edged sword ; that sword which proceeded out of His mouth, and was effectual, not only to the dividing asunder of joints and marrow, but also of soul and spirit. They should be made to feel the keenness of its sharp edges.

The doctrine of the nicolaitanes was bad, very bad ; and it had at length established itself in the bosom of the church, but evil as it was, there was something that was worse ; there was the doctrine of Balaam. The desperate wickedness of this false prophet is hardly exceeded anywhere ; but we need the search-light of new testament scriptures to reveal to us his motives, as well as to connect his guiding hand with subsequent events which led to the awful judgment of God upon the people. Israel had finished his wilderness journey, and the promised land lay before him ; a land of the olive, the vine, and the fig tree ; and the devil, true to his character, must by every means bar his entrance. He sent to Pether, in Mesopotamia,

for the son of Beor, a professed servant of Jehovah, but a covetous man, to come and curse Israel. The wretched man was quite willing to do it if he were paid for it, but his curses were turned to blessings in spite of himself, and the money he so ardently desired, he saw slipping through his fingers. But the devil had another expedient, and if the nation could not be cursed, individuals might; and the surest way to accomplish this, would be through the lusts of the flesh; we know the result; many thousands of the people perished. And now again in Pergamos history repeats itself; the world is brought in, in an attractive way; many foolish and hurtful lusts that drown men in destruction and perdition are engendered; and alas! the disciples of that false prophet, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, for which if need be, he would lead the people of God to destruction; are the natural and legitimate development of the nicolaitanism which conquered the people. But a day was coming when the sword of His mouth would be turned against them, and the word of the living God would be their own condemnation, and destruction.

To be an overcomer in the earlier part of the fourth century, meant a great deal; more indeed than in the Smyrna period, for while the roars of the devil drive souls to seek refuge in Christ; the only strong

tower in which they may find safety ; his seductions do not alarm, and his victims do not see his skilful web, until they are entangled in its meshes. Overcoming at such a time means separation ; and to separate from the world, and to be separated to Christ, often involves painful rendings of many things the natural heart would gladly retain. But, it is well worth while. The hidden manna, the white stone, and the new name were the promised rewards there ; under similar conditions they are the same now.

The golden pot of manna was laid up in the ark as a memorial of the grace that had fed them in the wilderness. In the land there would be other sources of supply, but not the bread from heaven, fallen upon the ground, as a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost ; contemptible indeed to nature, but God's provision in the wilderness for them, and for us. The remembrance in the glory of the presence and sustaining grace of the One whose flesh we eat, and whose blood we drink, as we traverse the dry and thirsty land which produces neither food nor drink for heavenly beings, will be one of the delights of that blessed scene, but if we seek for that food where the sun of this world's attraction has arisen, we shall find it has disappeared.

The white stone—token of approval—was well known to the ancients as having that signification, and

is not unknown in the same way, at the present day ; but when the blessed Lord Himself is the Approver, what an inestimable value is given to the symbol, for there is not only that which it expresses in itself, but engraven on it is a new name ; a name only known to the Giver and the receiver. How is it possible, it may be asked, that one may have a name, and that name be secret, inasmuch as the name is a designation, and to be that, must be well known. If we look back over the pages of sacred history we shall see in very many instances that names of persons have been changed at some marked period of their lives, and that the new name has been given to express some quality, or characteristic, or perhaps to record some circumstance connected with them of special significance. Now every saint has known the Lord and His grace in a peculiar and individual way, which no one beside can possibly understand or enter into ; and where a name is given which expresses the character of the bond which unites the soul to Christ, only the one who is conscious of the exercises of soul connected with its formation can understand the processes by which it was formed, or the joy of an ever present reminder.

We have now reached the conclusion of the first section of these deeply interesting epistles. The seven are divided, as many such presentations are, into three

and four, and the number three connects itself rather with God's side while four is that which belongs to humanity. Three churches, or church periods, had run their course, and, much as there was to condemn, there was no profession of Christ, recognised as such, beyond their pales. The injunction to hear the word of the Spirit was general, and after its appeal, were the blessed promises to the overcomer ; henceforth however the promises precede the injunction, and while it is general, it is after all only the overcomer who will have had ears to hear.

Mural inscriptions at Thyatira give us a knowledge of many things relating to this city of Seleucus Nicator as to which history is silent. We learn that outside the walls was a fane dedicated to Sambatha, a Jewish-Chaldeo-Persian sybil, whose oracular utterances would appeal to the superstition of Jewish Christians, who were not established in divine principles, as well as to the worshippers of Trymnas and Artemis. No wonder then that they should be told that the all-searching scrutiny of those eyes that were as a flame of fire, but leads to burning, inflexible judgment, where there is unholy and illicit intercourse with idolatry.

The child of God will find the warning as solemn, and the promises as encouraging, here as elsewhere ; for moral conditions, although presenting different

aspects, at different epochs, are in essence always the same ; and every christian, at all times, is bound to separate from evil whether moral or doctrinal. Is there a recognition of the Lordship of Christ? Let every one that nameth His name depart from iniquity. The apostle who wrote this book could say at another time, " Little children keep yourselves from idols," and idol worship includes something more than bowing down to an image of Buddha. The One who searcheth the reins and hearts, knows, not only the designs which are waiting an opportunity for execution, but the deeper things which have not yet taken shape ; all these will be judged in truth and righteousness. The faithful spouse repudiates and rejects everything that would be displeasing to her husband. She does not try to walk as close to defilement as possible without being defiled ; and the christian, in like manner, true to the One who has won his heart, does not adjust the balances which weigh his conduct with such extreme nicety as to be able to mark the point at which, what is called harm, deflects the beam ; but fleeing from all forms of idolatry, all recognition of idol-worship by abstaining from partaking of things sacrificed to idols, all spiritual fornication and adultery by intercourse therewith, desires only to please the One who has attracted and won the heart.

The day is coming when our blessed Lord will take to Himself His great power and will reign ; how amazing the thought that His saints will be associated with Him in His government. Many who are held by the proud world to be contemptible now, will be glorified beings then. But this, to those who should heed it, has become trite ; they have the present, the future no man knows anything about ; why should present ease and enjoyment be sacrificed, through apprehension of future judgments which may never be inflicted ; or, if inflicted, may be of a character quite different from what is threatened ; and so the vessels of wrath harden themselves to destruction, while the child of the light awaits the shining forth of the morning star which precedes the rising of the orb of day.

When ecclesiastical authority had taken definite shape in the appointment of a hierarchy, the bishop of Rome was but one among many bishops and with no greater powers, but having been asked on one occasion to arbitrate in a matter of difference between two bishops ; then afterwards, tendering his offices as arbitrator from time to time, and finally by commanding the reference of disputed questions to his arbitrament, he succeeded in acquiring a supremacy which was greatly increased, when Constantine removed the seat

of his empire to Byzantium, and left him to be the most important personage at Rome.

What we know as Roman Catholicism was of slow growth, for while its principles were seen at a very early age, its full development was the result of the accretion of many baneful influences, not the least of which was the doctrine of the nicolaitanes and the doctrine of Balaam ; but to these was added a still further advance in wickedness, yet along the very lines that had produced a state of things which made Jezebel a possibility. That wicked woman had usurped authority which the king only should have wielded, and she used it for infamous purposes. Baal worship became almost the universal religion under her fostering care, and she could also say to her husband, "I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." Her name continues to the present day as a by-word, and a reproach.

We have seen how early, in the history of the church of God, the evil principle which would place a section of that church in an inferior position, existed ; how it took form in first bringing the laos, the laity, into subjection ; then by destroying them, by barring their approach to God, and finally by a woman teaching and seducing the Lord's servants to practice those things which were an abomination to Him. Thus,

link by link, the chain was riveted which bound the professing church for centuries in medieval darkness, and such was Thyatira. But what about Jezebel? At first the church of God was composed of every believer, but as a result of the successive stages which we have been considering, the church in the Thyatira period was merely the hierarchy, and this church assumed the prerogatives only rightly belonging to its Head; the woman who was enjoined to silence and subjection became the teacher, displacing the divine Teacher, and as we learn from the Lord's parable in Matthew, only to insert leaven into the three measures of meal, the fine flour of the meat offering—in fact the very body of Christ—in which there was to be neither leaven, nor honey. That church which had been espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ had fallen so low that only one of the most infamous women whose history has come down to us, could be taken as representing its state and characteristics. The papacy then, if the meaning of the figures has been apprehended, stands clearly out as being in the very fore-front of a system which Thyatira presents. Not indeed as making an epoch, or distinct church period, which the three preceding ones had done, for there are children who are to be killed, and like the remaining three churches it is in existence when the Lord comes; but while it has not

a distinctly exclusive corporate existence, there is a distinct ecclesiastical state, whose principles, coming to a head in the fourth century, and dominating the professing church almost in its entirety for eleven centuries, has still its unwearied propaganda ; and its hideous mien looks out from many a colored pane than those avowedly roman.

Art lent her assistance to Jezebel ; painting, music, sculpture and architecture, vied with each other to embellish and make attractive the body from which the soul had departed, and when the moral sensibilities became clouded through sensuous accessories, the devil, although he might not be able to bring in Ashtoreth, " the queen of heaven " of the Babylonians, as an object of worship ; yet if he could place the blessed mother of the Lord on the same pedestal he would have accomplished his purpose, and he did it. The heathen, in worshipping idols, were in fact worshipping devils ; but if human beings who had died, however holy their lives might have been, or however immoral, could be appealed to as intercessors, it would still be demon worship, for the demons, although unseen and unsuspected, were really directing all. Besides all this, the terrors of God's judgment on the ungodly were mitigated or removed by the invention, satanic indeed in its inception, of an intermediate state

after death where the progress of the sinner on his downward course to hell was arrested, until such time as his relatives on earth could pay for the masses that would release his soul from the durance of purgatory, and bring him into the glory of the paradise of God ; his foul and spotted soul cleansed by the paters and aves of sinners vile as he ! How amazing that intelligent beings should be so credulous as to believe such inventions.

The message is sent by the Son of God ; and in no other epistle does the Lord take that character, and in no other would it be so fitting, as to that church which ever presents Him as the Son of Mary. The Son of God, with eyes as a flame of fire, and feet like fine brass, is surely a presentation as far as possible removed from the infant in the arms of madonna. And the hymns which have come down to us, do they not persistently elevate and exalt Mary, and just as persistently degrade the blessed Lord by making Him subject to, and practically inferior to her. But even in Thyatira there is a remnant of grace, "the rest," in whom is love, and faith, and service, and endurance, and whose last works are more than the first ; who have not the horrid doctrines, nor have known the depths of Satan as they speak ; and while the authorities have before them as a guiding principle the

subjugation of nations as well as individuals, the remnant of grace will hereafter be associated with the Lord Himself, who will then reign from the river to the ends of the earth ; having conferred upon them the same power and authority, which, in the second psalm, He Himself is to receive from Jehovah ; so that not only does the epistle begin in a manner consistent with what is to be presented, but the promise of reward is also in keeping with the existing state of things.

CHAPTER III.

Whatever may have been the producing cause, a lethargy existed in the church of Sardis, which not only prevented the giving forth of a testimony to the grace of God ; but which, by a continued progress in declension, had become well nigh lifeless. The One whose glory should have been reflected in the stars which were His, but not now said to be held in His right hand ; and who looked for a response in His own, to the energy of the Holy Spirit's operations, found nothing to commend in the general condition at Sardis.

If there is one thing more than another which the child of God has to guard against, it is the negligence and indifference as to divine things which prepare the heart for the toleration of that which is positively Christ-dishonoring. What is the chief end of man, if not to glorify God and enjoy Him forever ? Yet do we not see on all sides the most heartless and callous indifference as to His claims, and His holy will ; the prevailing thought, even among those who are called by His name, being, that the chief end of man is, after having made things right for the next world, to go in

as largely as possible for everything that the present world can give. Alas ! that the holy name of Christ, through those who claim to be His, should be dragged in the dust, not only by the objects christians have so often before them, but also much more by the means through which those objects are sought to be obtained. On Sunday, and it may be on other special occasions, there is usually an air of piety and devotion, which finds no place, indeed would be out of keeping, in the frivolity and worldliness of the drawing-room, or the hard unrighteousness of the counting house. There is a name to live, but dead withal, and yet a greater responsibility from what had been received and heard, than where the truth was unknown ; but judgment was coming with noiseless steps and it would burst upon all these lifeless ones with overwhelming power. Thank God there is a faithful remnant in Sardis, as there was in Thyatira, and the blessed promises made to them, we can without rapine appropriate. How it touches the heart to be told of walking in white, with our adorable Saviour in the paradise of God, because of undefiled garments here ; and, because of overcoming, be clothed in white raiment. We shall see in a later chapter that the white raiment is the righteousness of saints. His name would not be blotted out of the book of life, but ah ! how many names will be. The

church registers of this world, which should only contain the names of those who have life in Christ, will present a sadly blotted and disfigured appearance in that day ; and search then may be made in vain, for names which had been written in very large letters on the books of this world's profession. You who have shrunk, it may be, from what you are pleased to call an ostentatious parading of your religion ; but which should have been a decided confession of the name of Christ ; what will be your feelings as you hear the name of one you have thought unnecessarily pronounced in his profession, proclaimed before His Father and before His angels ?

The promises here, as elsewhere, will be seen to be perfectly in keeping with the state of things in Sardis, because they are in marked contrast therewith.

The darkness that overspread Europe when Teetzel hawked his indulgences from town to town, was an egyptian darkness ; a darkness that might be felt. It is impossible to conceive a more degraded thought of the holiness and righteousness of God, than that, for money ; as though He needed money ; He would sell for a specified period an indulgence to commit sin ! He who is so holy that He cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance or approbation. But when this state of things had reached its

climax, the Spirit of God moved a monk to leave his cloister and raise a standard against it. The protestant reformation, while it did not succeed Thyatira, and become an epoch in church history, was nevertheless a distinct issue, and the producer of a church state which has gone on side by side with romanism for three hundred years, and both will be here for judgment when the Lord comes. I have no doubt there are those who will strongly resist the application of Sardis to protestantism ; those who think things are going on very satisfactorily in the religious world ; and that the time is coming when the world will be converted to christianity by the agencies now abroad. One has but to listen to the solemn words of the Lord Himself as well as to those of His servant Paul, to know that in the last days perilous times shall come.

When Luther nailed his theses to the door of the church in Wittemberg on the last day of October, 1517, a direct issue was taken with Rome, which twelve years later was followed by the celebrated protest of the elector of Saxony and others, against the proposal of the diet of Spire to stop any further innovations in respect to the mass, or other religious matters, until an oecumenical council could be called. But although neither the one nor the other of these acts had much more than a negative character, yet behind all the

movement, which contained so large a human element, and in so far deplorable, the Spirit of God was raising for settlement the one cardinal question, as to how souls are brought into relationship with God ; and the issue has been of incalculable blessing to millions of souls since, who have learned that by simple faith in a crucified and risen Saviour, and not by works of righteousness, the sinner is received into the blessed favor of God, and given an inheritance with all them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus. There was perhaps but one substantial step made at the reformation, but that was an immense one ; it was in fact revolutionary, and has been the basis of all real progressive work since. Why then, it may be asked, when a protest had been raised, and a testimony established, against the teaching of Jezebel, should such a state supervene as that which Sardis illustrates? No doubt many influences were at work to frustrate as much as possible the effect of what the Holy Spirit had wrought through the little company of blessed men who had arrived at a knowledge of the forgiveness of sins by a road upon which Rome had set up notices innumerable, such as "No thoroughfare," "Dangerous," but which they had found to be the only way of approach to God. There were however two prime reasons which checked the power of this remarkable upheaval and soon led to

a lifeless profession. It was doubtless a great thing to shake off the yoke of Rome, but having done so, after having been borne down by the galling burden, they proceeded to place themselves under another yoke, which, if less burdensome, was still a yoke and a bondage. We who have been brought to God know that the Lord Jesus is a Son over His house. We know furthermore, that His Lordship is continually pressed in the new testament ; that there is but one Lord, one faith, one baptism ; so that the assumption of the Pope of Rome to exercise an authority which the Lord had not delegated, was clearly unscriptural, and when the reformers accepted the civil rulers as the heads and authorities of the church, they placed themselves, unconsciously it may be, in a position which took away largely the spirit of dependence upon the risen and glorified Head, transferring it to these, who without intending it, had usurped His place and authority. Furthermore, while salvation by faith in Christ was preached, one has only to look at the writings of the reformers to see how large a place baptism had in their thoughts as connected with faith, for salvation. There was besides, a re-action from a religion of works to the neglect of works, for while valueless for salvation, we find when saved that God had foreordained that we should walk in them.

If there was not repentance and watching, the One who had the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars would come upon them as a thief ; thus the Sardis state like that of Thyatira, goes on to the Lord's coming, and the character which it took in the early part of the sixteenth century, it does not change, until judgment descends upon the world, and Sardis finds its doom with it, for indeed it is a part of the world.

How blessed it was for those dear saints, who, as the first century was drawing to a close, found themselves in such an association as that at Philadelphia, where the name of the city in which they lived characterised the relationship which existed between them. The fame of the wine of Philadelphia has been celebrated by heathen poets, as well as stamped upon the coinage of the city ; but the true wine, which is only tasted through communion with God, these dear saints enjoyed in such manner that the Holy Spirit has kept for us in this epistle a memorial of it, like as the golden pot of manna was laid up in the ark ; and as to the future, the doors of the storehouse of love are thrown wide open, that the beloved ones might see with rapture the marvellous treasures laid up for them against that time when they would drink the true philadelphian wine, in a new way, with the adorable Object of their hearts affections in the coming kingdom.

Happy Philadelphians ! blessed saints of God ! our hearts have gone out to you in affectionate remembrance, as we wait for the time when in the paradise of God we shall bind more closely those blessed bonds of brotherly love which have united us to you.

Fellow christian, do you love the brethren ? Does your heart go out in brotherly affection to every known child of God ? This you know is the mark which the scriptures give by which you may know if you yourself are in the faith ; it is a positive command : " That he who loveth God, love his brother also." You are not required to have fellowship with the ways, or condone the acts of those who are walking according to the course of this world ; but you are enjoined, in numberless passages, to show your love for the brethren, both by example and practice. Alas ! because " they follow not with us," there is the " biting and devouring one another."

It was the prayer of the blessed Lord that they might all be one, that the world might know that the Father had sent Him ; but now when He asks, " Where is my flock, my beautiful flock," there is no reply ; and the angels may well weep at the heart-breaking sight of the different members of the body of Christ in violent antagonism one towards another, and

the Lord robbed of His glory, which He should have had in His church.

It is very blessed to be a philadelphian ; for as such, there is not only the sense of divine favor, but the reciprocal affection which is sure to be evoked where it is in practice. Love is of God ; God is love ; and although the devil has brought in his counterfeit here as elsewhere, presenting his human formula of "love to the neighbor," the christian has to remember the word which has come to him from another source," "He that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him."

It is blessed to be a philadelphian, but O how blessed to be an overcomer in Philadelphia. How entrancing the promises to such. First, he shall be a pillar in that marvellous structure for which the Spirit of God is preparing the living stones in the distant quarry. Child of God do you desire to be a pillar in that temple? If so, remember that the polished shafts which adorn the facades of great buildings are only brought to that state of beauty by a long continued process of grinding and polishing. Who could recognize in that beautiful pillar which is the admiration of every passer, the rough block of granite, without a particle of beauty, which some time before had passed us on its way to the finishing house. We would like

to be all, and have all, that we read of without passing along the road which leads to what we desire. We would like to order our own paths, and a sorry mess we would make of it if allowed to do so. Be assured that the place in which you are, if it is one in which you can "abide with God," is the place in which He has put you, and you can glorify Him there in a way you could not do anywhere else. A young christian wanted her life wholly devoted to the Lord, and she prayed earnestly that she might have it so ordered that she could best serve Him. After passing forty years on a bed of sickness and suffering where she had witnessed for her Master and been used of Him in an exceptionally blessed way, she touchingly remarked; "I did not think it would have been after this manner," "I will write upon him the name of my God, the name of the city of my God and my new name."

If we meet one who has given himself up to a sensuous life, we say that bestiality is stamped on every lineament of his face; and on the contrary, if one is walking with God, how apparent it is. In that day of undistracted work grace has wrought in the soul is unmistakably in evidence. "And my new name," what is that? It is remarkable that the word used when speaking of the Lord Jesus in His sacrificial aspect differs in the revelation from that used elsewhere.

In the gospel of John He is the *Amnos*, the Lamb of God ; in this book He is the *Arnion*, the little Lamb. If He presented Himself as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, it but proved the perversity of the human heart which saw no beauty in Him, and esteemed Him but as a root out of the dry ground. They that passed by wagged their heads saying, "If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross." Despised and rejected of men, His humiliation was complete, yet, in that sphere of indescribable glory stands "an *Arnion* as it had been slain." He bears in heaven the marks of His abasement, and ever reminds His own to what a depth He had descended for their ransom, when He sold all that He had to purchase the field in which the treasure lay concealed. Not only so, but with wondrous grace, He identifies with Himself the philadelphian overcomer as one who had "continued with Him in His temptation," and perpetuates the faithfulness which in His grace He had given the energy for. Blessed and adorable Saviour !

It is quite evident that there is not, and has not been, any corporate embodiment of Philadelphia. I am aware that the principles are professed by some who reject every cardinal truth of revealed religion, and individually undertake their own salvation, but the

travesty is of so gross a character that only those who commit themselves to satanic influences could be deceived by it. One thing is evident, that western Europe, where the sardis state was developed, soon sank into a death-like lethargy until the Holy Spirit again, two hundred years later began raising up, and energising, gifted servants with different degrees of capacity, and different lines of service, but all tending to philadelphianism ; and although sections of the professing church have sunk so low as to be mere agencies for the amusement or instruction of the guilty world, yet in all the deepening gloom there is an increasing energy of the Spirit, until philadelphians are met in many unexpected places, and the assurance is given that they will hear the welcome shout, and quickly, which will call them up to a scene where love is indigenious, and not exotic.

The Lord presents Himself as the holy, the true, not so much what He is doing as what He is, and, as ever, in keeping with the state He has found, but also, for the only time in these epistles, except in the word to Smyrna, we have jewish accessories ; why is this? In addition to the philadelphian revival in protestantism there has been also another and remarkable revival, not indeed leading souls into the liberty and joy of known relationship with God ; but with many pious

sentiments, austerity of manners, and devotedness of life, presenting a religion of works, which can provide neither peace of conscience nor rest of heart ; but like the insatiable horse-leech's daughters sending up a continual cry of, Give, give ! the tractarians here, and similar propagandists elsewhere, became the modern representatives of galatian troublers whom the apostle desired cut off. It was in effect an imitation of the jewish synagogue and in so far as it sought to set up again that which God had brought to an end in the cross of Christ, it was satanic ; yet with proud self-assertion it could contemptuously disdain those who were identified with the true Son of David, in whose hands was the key which others might claim to have, but had not, and who had set before His little despised company of faithful souls an opened door, which none could shut.

Their strength was small, a very feeble folk, but the day is coming when the proud pharisee, if he had an homage to present, would find himself abased as low as the feet of the despised ones ; a standing principle of God's government, as well as its counterpart, that he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Marked characteristics of philadelphianism are, keeping His word and not denying His name. Many things have contributed during this century to create

or increase an interest in the word of God ; and as the precious volume has become more known, it has been more highly prized, saints finding it indeed not only a lamp to the feet and a light to the path, but a source of joy, of strength, of comfort, and consolation to the weary pilgrim. The enemy of souls has not seen this latter-day revival of interest in the word of God without taking steps to counteract it ; and his mode of acting is ever the same. Long ago at Philippi he sent a damsel, who was possessed with a spirit of Python, to cry after the apostles, that " These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." He assumes to be the most ardent champion for the truth, until, obtaining control of the movement, he turns it into a channel where it ceases to be the truth, and becomes a lie ; so that it is judged by many to have never been but a lie. Witness the precious truth of the Lord's coming for His saints, given for their comfort, which so great a number reject, because the assurances so frequently given that He would come at a specified time have not been fulfilled. And how persistently the inspiration of the bible, the authorship of the pentateuch, and the revelation of God's purposes in prophecy, which old testament scriptures contain, are contested by professed servants of Christ, men whose titles give them a

quasi authority to expound the meaning of the scriptures, a meaning which many of them have never grasped.

To Pergamos it could be said: "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." To Philadelphia: "Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." How vast the difference! There may be a taking upon one the name of Christ, and although there may not be an earnest contention for the faith once committed to the saints, yet not an absolute denial of it, and withal, not a particle of reality; but the keeping of His word which He hath magnified above all His name; not commandments merely; not words even, but the knowledge of His holy will through intimate relationship; the expression of His mind, His word; this it is which is grateful to the Lord's heart, and the confession of His name cannot but follow.

But not only is the Lord coming; a day of great trial for the whole habitable world is coming also; and although, in wonderful patience, God is graciously waiting on a guilty world which not only crucified His beloved Son, but for nearly nineteen centuries has continued to reject the testimony of His Holy Spirit, until forbearance can go no further, and God will shortly proceed to do His work, His strange work, and

cut it short in righteousness ; but, blessed assurance, not a single philadelphian will pass through that awful tribulation.

There remains for our consideration but the church in Laodicea, and who, in reading the history of these churches, but would be impressed with the different state of things prevailing in contiguous places, as at Philadelphia where there was nothing to condemn, to Laodicea, where there was nothing to commend.

Re-built, and re-named, to do honor to Queen Laodicea, the assembly seems to have caught something of the spirit of self-complacency, which the association with, and favor of royalty had given the inhabitants of this city, and nothing more effectually blinds the eyes to a true judgment of a moral condition than this. Far more estimable in their own eyes than either the neighboring assemblies of Smyrna or Philadelphia, they had to learn from the lips of the faithful and true witness, that the things in which they were priding themselves were of no value in the new creation where all things were of God, and of which His Son, the faithful and true witness, was the beginning.

Reader, how far shall you have to travel to find a modern representative of this self-satisfied church? Some time, in some public place, perhaps in a railway

carriage, you may have admired the reflection of a familiar form and face which the words, *Tuum est*, underneath, has suddenly reminded you, was your own; and as you read of those who in the past were rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing, has it not been a reflection of the thought of your own consistency, propriety, respectability and religiousness, such as has often risen up before your mind, assuming proportions which you have been able to contemplate with much satisfaction?

There is perhaps no more formidable obstruction in the path of christian progress, than for a believer to be at perfect peace with himself. The Holy Spirit is ever bringing Christ before the soul as the only object worthy to absorb the admiration, and excite the worship, of the one whose sins have been forgiven. It is by beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, that we are changed into the same image; by looking away unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of faith, that we are enabled to run with patience the race that is set before us. Yet, with many, introspection is thought to be a factor in spiritual growth, although it is clear that it could only lead to one of two results; if honest, to discouragement, as the hopelessness of arriving at perfect sanctification by that process would soon be apparent; if deceived by the treachery of one's own

heart it would not only be to find that " he who trusteth his own heart is a fool," but also that the standard to which attainment was thought to have been made, was, after all, a human standard, and far, far short of the glory of God. I am aware that the full blown laodicean is spued out of Christ's mouth as a nauseous thing, but the characteristics which lead to that are apparent everywhere ; and the christian cannot afford to travel such a road, because the Spirit of God is ever reminding the saints that eternal life is for those who by patient continuance in well doing seek after glory and honor and incorruptibility. O child of God, if you have set up a pedestal and climbed to the top of it, I pray you come down. Jesus does not pass that way. O be not luke-warm, you are much in earnest in your own affairs, be so in the things of God. How foolish that you should be influenced by either the sneers or the contemptuous smiles of the proud world which rushes madly by you. If you are an overcomer you will be seated hereafter in joint heirship with the Great King upon His throne of glory. Who would care then for the sneers of those who had sunk down into the pit. Their opinion of you then would be of less weight than the dust upon a moth's wing.

It is evident that Sardis, as a church state, comes out of Thyatira ; that Philadelphia comes out of Sardis ;

and there can be no question but that Laodicea is evolved from Philadelphia.

The movement which began in the early part of the eighteenth century and which, under God, disturbed the stagnant waters of a lifeless profession, has gone on intermittently pretty well down to the present day, with varying, but decreasing energy.

Contempt and derision were heaped upon the devoted servants of the Lord, who preached a crucified and risen Christ, not only for salvation, but for deliverance from this present evil world. The church and the world were going on together in the most cordial, indeed affectionate relationship, and both were ready to resent, and did resent, an interference with a state of things so eminently satisfactory.

We have seen, when considering a previous church history, in what manner the devil succeeds in getting control of a movement which although begun in the energy of the Holy Spirit, has when committed to human responsibility ended in complete failure. The philadelphian revival was a very blessed one, and very real, although producing but little strength. Many gave themselves up to the study of the neglected word of God, and openly confessed the name of Christ before a guilty world, and a shameless church; but as time wore on, and the grace of God reached persons of

eminence in the world, contempt and ostracism gave way to admiration and emulation. An ostentatious parading of the Lord's name where there was but little heart for Him, and a knowledge of the word, acquired with facility through the multiplication of books explanatory of its meaning and connection, became fashionable, and separation from the world and to Christ came to be with many a hollow mockery, the more reprehensible from its pretentiousness.

How sickening it is to see an air of complacency, and self-satisfaction, with arms folded over a heart which has not a single pulsation of love for Christ, but where, if there were windows in human breasts, might be seen in full development, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. Now, all that is mere pretence, vaunt itself as it may, will be spued out of His mouth ; but alas ! many who will be preserved from impending judgment are even now, it may be, wearing garments spotted by the flesh, perhaps vexing their righteous souls, but drifting helplessly with a current they have not the spiritual energy to stem. What the loss throughout eternity will be, who can estimate ? Now, and here, in this path of faith it is, that we learn the apprehension of that for which we are apprehended. In the coming glory there will be brought into exercise the lessons we learnt in

our school-days, and if here we have never passed beyond the kinter-garten, how little we shall know with all saints the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of the blessed ways of God in grace, or the love of Christ which although passing knowledge the heart can rest in with perfect and undisturbed delight.

Two things seem to characterise Loadicea in addition to the state of luke-warmness ; the pretentious claim of having riches, and the arrogance so often its accompaniment. In Smyrna there was confessed poverty, but true riches ; here there is the most abject poverty and unconsciousness of it. They are, as it is said, living in a fool's paradise. It would be invidious to single out for special reference those in whom the characteristics are now most marked, and it would be superfluous, as the wretched principles of Loadicea have permeated the whole professing church and its salient features are to be seen everywhere.

If we turn back to the canon of old testament scripture we shall find in the last book of those sacred writings a state of things to which Loadicea answers in a remarkable way. There, there was the lowest possible moral state, so low indeed, such moral obliquity, that when appealed to by Jehovah's prophet they could reply with surprised air and wounded sensibilities, "Wherein have we despised thy name?"

Wherein have we polluted thee?" There is not only self-complacency now, but self-assertion, and if what they say illustrates the one, what they are called proves the other; Laodicea, the people's rights; democracy in spiritual things; a complete reversal of God's order. They are counselled to buy gold, white raiment, and apply eye salve. They are rich, they can afford to buy, and they are too proud to accept a gift; but gold in scripture figures that which is divine, and tried in the fire is indeed what the blessed Lord was when as the anti-type of the sin offering He endured the fires of God's righteous judgment; let them buy that. White raiment is practical righteousness, now Christ is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption; let them buy this white raiment and hide the shame of a nakedness they are unconscious of. Last of all, the eye salve, not indeed to buy it as the others, but to use it. When the Lord on one occasion passed by and saw a man blind from his youth, He anointed his eyes with ointment made of clay and His spittle. Now the effect of this anointing would be to increase if possible the natural darkness of the blind eyes, but by washing in the pool of Siloam the wonderful effect was produced of giving sight to the eyes laden with the clay. That is to say, the Son of God presented in human flesh but

increased the darkness of the natural mind, until by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the word, the Sent One of the Father was by faith apprehended.

The Lord is now outside the door and knocking, in case anyone would hear His blessed voice ; and if one were an overcomer in the midst of so nauseous a state of things, he would sit down hereafter in joint occupancy with the Lord upon His throne even as He, the great Overcomer, had before been given a seat upon the Father's throne.

And now we have traced the course of our Rebekah, the true church of God in the midst of the mass of profession, across the sands of the desert, guided by the faithful servant to the happy meeting with the expectant Bridegroom who awaits her coming. Her journey has been one of many vicissitudes. Bedecked indeed by the ornaments His grace has provided, and borne by the provision of His love, yet the way has been long and wearisome. The heat of the day has been oppressive ; the dews of the night have been chilling ; the country traversed has been arid and drear, and again and again she has been ready to faint and turn back, but the faithful Servant has encouraged her heart by telling her continually of the Person to whom she is betrothed, and the possessions upon which she is about to enter. Happy bride ! that

such an One should ever have set His love upon thee. Her garments are none of the best ; many a rent and many a tear disclose the record of her wanderings ; and her face, which has not always been veiled from the rays of this world's glory is freckled and sunburnt ; yet, notwithstanding all this, the Man who is meditating in the field at eventide and now comes forth to meet her, is none other than the One who has chosen her, has sustained and preserved her, and with whom she is about to enter upon an unending course of ineffable delight.

In connection with the history of the church in its progress through the world two distinct facts are presented. Beginning with that assembly which in its first estate so answered to the mind of the Lord that the highest and most blessed truths could be communicated to it, we see a downward progress, however grace may have interposed from time to time to stay it, terminating, as to the profession, in complete rejection, after the Lord has taken away to heaven all that He can own as His. Man in responsibility is, as ever, a failure, and although God may begin a dispensation gloriously, the end, where man has to do with it, is inglorious. Nor will the coming millennial age be an exception ; although it begins so happily, so much beyond the previous period of Jewish relationship that

the former is not remembered or brought into mind, yet the end of that too is a revolt against the Lord and against His holy city ; a revolt that is accentuated by the coming of Satan upon the scene again, but for which declension of soul will have prepared his ready instruments who have been giving a feigned obedience. The feast of tabernacles, a millennial picture, begins with a sacrifice of thirteen bullocks, and ends with seven.

But there is another, and a blessed picture to be seen as this panorama unfolds itself before our wondering gaze ; and it is, as it were, God's response to man's unhappy side of things, for while on the one hand the tendency is downward, on the other it is ascending ; and the seven steps by which the ascent is made from eating of the tree of life to a seat on the throne of heaven, is an opening out of a continually expanding wealth of blessing, so amazing that the mind is overwhelmed in its effort to realise the stupendous character of the gifts of grace. No human eye has ever seen such glories, no heart of the natural man has ever conceived them, but God in infinite condescension has by the Spirit revealed them to faith, and now we wait for them, but O so longingly, as we strain our expectant eyes to catch the first glimpse of the coming glory. "The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ."

CHAPTER IV.

There is a deep seated desire in most hearts to lift the veil which separates the present from the unseen world ; a desire which Satan has used in all ages for the delusion and destruction of souls ; a desire which however the Spirit of God gratifies as to believers by setting open a door in heaven and by revealing to our wondering and adoring gaze a scene of transcendent glory, an innumerable company, the occupation in which they are engaged, and above and beyond all, the glorious Person whose presence in their midst calls forth the glad acclaims from intelligent beings, part of whom having been redeemed by His own blood can sing of His grace in the loftiest strains of heart-felt praise ; and part, never having sinned and not needing redemption, can speak of the infinite wisdom and infinite power which He has displayed in creation.

The prophet now recognizes the voice of his Master, who, on earth had spoken to him from among the golden candlesticks and who now speaks to him from heaven, calling him up to see the things which

were to follow after the church's history on earth had closed.

How strange it is that the picture of the heavenly Jerusalem given at the close of this book, which so many accept as literal, should have more attraction for the heart of most than the view the open door here discloses. If a faithful and loving wife were called to see great honor and dignity conferred upon her husband, the attraction of the scene for her heart would be the honored person, and not the honoring crowd, or the splendid accessories; so the devoted heart when filled with the Spirit sees first the glorious Person upon the throne, and then the surroundings which minister to His glory and nothing more. People are continually asking: Where do you think heaven is? Is it beyond the stars? I care not where it is. The location is of the least consequence. A lost child was crying to be taken home, when asked where her home was, she replied: "Where mother is." It is our adorable Lord and Saviour who makes heaven for us, and our delightful occupation hereafter will be rather in exploring the illimitable moral glories that centre in Him, than in measuring space or weighing atoms. "And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone."

When God created the one, who now fallen, is become the adversary, the destroyer, he was given every precious stone for his covering, and ten are enumerated, indicating creature responsibility. The first of these was sardius and the sixth jasper. When the breast plate of judgment was made for the high priest, type of Christ, twelve precious stones in inclosings of gold were set in it, beginning with sardius and ending with jasper; the number indicating completeness of divine government through human instrumentality. And when the holy city is seen coming down from God out of heaven it has twelve foundations, the first is jasper the sixth sardius, but the One who sits upon the throne is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all things; the sum of all perfection, whether as the One who, conferring moral qualities holds the possessor responsible for the exercise of them, or in grace sustains the ones He is using governmentally, whether Israel or the church, He is all in all, the One who created all things, who sustains all things, and for whose pleasure they exist.

The church having been translated, and God being about to visit the earth with dire judgment for the second time, these two chapters being the prelude thereto, the bow of His promise is seen, and

seen in heaven ; but the rays which produce the bow are not broken into their component parts as on earth. That is, that God's covenant with creation remains inviolate whatever display of divine judgments may be impending ; that this covenant is connected with His moral glory as the emerald indicates, and however little the dwellers upon the earth may understand the mysterious government of an unseen and unknown throne, those who are in association with it have their hearts confirmed in the blessed assurance of God's faithfulness, and furthermore, that there is intelligence now to apprehend His ways in their entirety.

And who are they, these throne-sitters, these four and twenty elders who surround the throne of God? Ah! they are saved sinners, saved by God's grace, and now the enduring monuments of His mercy. Again and again when on earth they had been told of royalty and priesthood, but how feebly these gifts of grace had been apprehended. But now both royalty and priesthood are in evidence as this company of royal priests calmly regard the intimations from the throne of the coming judgments.

The Holy Spirit, the divine energy by which the works of God are effected, is there in the fulness of burning and consuming power, and no seraph is now able to avert the stroke of divine wrath upon earth-

dwellers, by taking a live coal from off the altar and applying it to polluted lips. But none in that blessed scene are perturbed. The elders are clothed in spotless righteousness ; and although there is a sea, as of old there was in connection with the temple, it is not now to cleanse away defilement, there is nothing unclean there, but the fixed transparent purity is indicated by a sea of glass.

Finally there is another, a remarkable and important accessory to the throne, the living creatures. It has pleased God to reveal to the children of men so much of heavenly things and heavenly persons as He has put in any way in relationship with us, and from the time that we find the necessity for divine judgment through the alienation of man, we see the cherubim as the executors of it, whether as wielding flaming swords to bar the way to the tree of life ; whether as wrought in figure upon the curtains of the tabernacle to warn against an entrance "at all times" into the holiest ; or, whether, with sword of judgment sheathed, they look down forever with undistracted gaze upon a blood-sprinkled mercy seat, they are ever in the midst of the throne and round about it. But God's government of the earth, of a fallen and ruined creation, is necessarily providential and adapted to an existing condition, consequently the characteristics of the four principal

heads of animate creation are embodied in the living creatures. We are accustomed on earth to see a figure representing justice with a drawn sword and bandaged eyes ; the idea being impartiality—but as a matter of fact it is a true representation of the frequent failure of human justice through blindness—but the executors of divine judgments have a perfect knowledge of all things, whether hidden or manifest, they are full of eyes round and within.

In the year that King Uzziah died, the prophet Isaiah saw heavenly beings in association with the throne, but they were seraphim and not cherubim ; not the upholders of its righteousness, but the proclaimers of its holiness. They rest not day and night saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Jehovah Sabaoth.” Past, present, or future, God’s government in providence is essentially holy. They had six wings, but four of these were to screen the seat of intelligence and the power for walk. Holy beings indeed they were, but absolute holiness is found only in its source. The sun in its brightness sheds a light beyond anything else we know on earth, but on the way to Damascus a light shone suddenly down upon a company of persecutors who were breathing out threatening and slaughter ; a light beyond the brightness of the sun. The incorporation of seraphic qualities into these composite living creatures makes

the remarkable and deeply interesting symbolism complete ; and as they strike a note of praise it calls forth a response from the elders which neither the lightnings, nor thunderings, nor voices, had produced, and they cast their crowns before the throne of Him from whom they had been received, as they render the homage of intelligent worshippers ; yet it is the glory of the Creator they celebrate and no word as to redemption is uttered, nor are angels mentioned. The cherubim and seraphim, whatever their status in heavenly courts, are known to us as angelic beings, and the angels are symbolically presented in the living creatures. We shall see presently how the living creatures themselves are merged and lost in another creation.

CHAPTER V.

We have seen when considering an earlier chapter that the Ancient of days to whom the Son of Man had been brought in Daniel's vision was the One who in this vision walked among the candlesticks ; and in the last chapter, the One who sat upon the throne, whose creatorial glory was celebrated, is here the One from whose hand the overflowing book of divine judgment is taken by the Lamb ; that is to say, it is through an acquired rather than through an inherent or intrinsic worthiness that the Lion of the tribe of Judah takes the book. He has prevailed, but how? Ah! the saints of God know well how effectually He has prevailed at the cross ; what perfect right He has to dash in pieces as a potter's vessel the recalcitrant nations of the earth ; and that the time is at hand when Jehovah will set His King upon His holy hill of Zion.

The reader will be impressed as progress is made in the consideration of these marvellous unfoldings of God's purposes and counsels, how much there is of jewish connection in it all ; and a word as to this at the

present time will suffice, not only for the present chapter, but for the subsequent references of a similar character.

The church's history upon earth, as we have seen, has been closed. The temple of living stones has been transferred to heaven, and the form of expression used as to the saints of God upon earth has been suddenly changed. It is no longer the relationship of children with a Father in whose hearts the indwelling Spirit has wrought affections consistent with the relationship, but an earthly people whose thoughts and desires will henceforth be, not heavenly, but earthly. Israel will again be in the ascendancy, and there will be a partial restoration of Jewish ritual and sacrifices. The earth is being cleansed for the avowed purpose of placing God's ancient people, Israel, in their own land, where they are to be the intermediaries of blessing which flows down from above, through them, to the nations of the world. The present dispensation is unique in that a bride is being "built" for the last Adam who will presently call her away to the mansions of His preparing; and old testament prophecies which are connected with the earth have no reference to heavenly people, and no suggestion of the present break in the dispensations for their calling. The prophecies which go on from the past to a coming age are continuous, as

witness the quotation from Isaiah, part of which the Lord read at Nazareth, and without finishing handed the book to the minister and sat down. That day that scripture was fulfilled in their ears ; but who in past ages would have suspected that a long interval of two thousand years nearly would have elapsed before the fulfilment of the unread portions. Now it is the day of God's long suffering grace ; a day in which He is patiently enduring the hatred and rebellion of His own creatures, whose punishment would be richly deserved if His judgment should be poured out upon them, and which indeed as a righteous and holy God He must eventually proceed to do ; but what effect has been produced by this exhibition of amazing grace? A guilty race has made use of it to denounce as a monster the God who could execute righteous judgments, forgetting that even the bonds of human society would be completely shattered if indifference to wrong doing, which is falsely called grace, should generally prevail. Those wise doctors who cannot "reconcile the God of the old testament with the God of the new," have yet to learn the primary principles of all government ; and if it has pleased Him to send one nation to the destruction of another, where iniquity has become full, instead of destroying the sinners by a direct judgment of fire and brimstone, or otherwise, in order to impress more

vividly upon the nations His moral dealings with the race ; is it not the height of effrontery for the potsherds of earth, mere creatures, to dare to sit in judgment upon their beneficent Creator, whose works proclaim Him as infinite in wisdom, in power, in goodness and in love ?

It may be that some of those who are even now engaged in this daring work of replying against God will find to their consternation that the record of past judgments, which they refuse to accept, will be exceeded by those which are about to come.

If it is the Lion of the tribe of Judah who takes the book ; when seen in the midst of the throne, of the living creatures, and of the elders, it is a Lamb as it had been slain, but with divine fullness of power and of intelligence.

In the previous chapter the living creatures were distinct from the elders ; here they begin to coalesce and finally disappear, for here is the beginning of the transference of administrative power from angels to men which is to characterise the millennial age to come ; and when the Son of Man shall have taken His seat upon His own throne, the mystery of iniquity having been exposed, and the saints seen as identified with Him in His kingly power ; then symbolism will have fulfilled its mission and cease ; then the qualities which

have been figured in the living creatures will have found their exposition in the saints of the Most High who take the kingdom and reign with Christ, being used of Him to execute the righteous judgments of the throne, and to proclaim the holiness of the One who occupies it. The living creatures and the elders fall down together before the throne, but it is the latter and not the former who are said to have harps and golden bowls full of incense, the prayers of saints, for there are saints again upon earth, although the church of the first born ones has disappeared. "And they sung a new song." In the last chapter they said certain things, now they sing them, for redemption has come in and the Redeemer is before them. Many of us have frequently heard an anthem which begins thus: "Hark, the herald angels sing!" but they do nothing of the kind, they were heard praising God and saying. Nor do angels sing; later in the chapter they say with a loud voice; it is only the redeemed who sing. There was no song until after the Red Sea had been crossed. The morning stars sang together indeed, but it was the music of the spheres, and there again the sons of God shouted, they did not sing.

Both saints and angels declare the worthiness of the slain Lamb, but the saints have a personal knowledge which the angels have not, they can sing,

“Thou art worthy” ; and note here, it is not that He has redeemed us. He has redeemed to God. It is the Actor, not the acted upon whom the Spirit of God is occupied with. Nor is it that He has made us kings and priests, and that we shall reign on the earth ; He has made them it, and they shall reign over the earth. But to whom does this doxology refer? We have seen the golden bowls of incense in the hands of the elders, the prayers of suffering saints upon earth ; and presently two distinct companies of these would suffer martyrdom, the one for the word of God and for their testimony, the other for not receiving the mark of the beast ; but what would be the fate of these, for the first resurrection was passed, and the second was a resurrection of judgment ?

Ah ! God had not forgotten these faithful ones ; at the end of the tribulation they would be raised and crowned, and be part of the first resurrection ; and this assurance, the word we are now considering, will be the comfort and sustainment of these afflicted ones, that they too have been made kings and priests.

An innumerable company of angels now appear in an outer circle, for here, as before remarked, the angels are giving way in administration to man, so that all of God’s intelligent heavenly beings unite in proclaiming the worthiness of the One who in taking the book,

takes the first step in a course, the end of which is the reconciliation of all things to Himself ; and those who have been reconciled are the ones who most fully apprehend what is involved in such an action, for they only are said to prostrate themselves in adoration.

There is, I think, a good deal of misapprehension abroad as to the scriptural meaning of reconciliation, and a brief digression here as to what the Spirit of God presents to us in the word on the subject, may help to an understanding of the ways of God in relation to His fallen creature man, as well as to a creation which his fall has degraded.

As the result of the work of the cross, a proclamation of reconciliation has been issued to revolting subjects. Will the rebels, those who are alienated and enemies, whose hatred has been shown forth in wicked deeds, will these now lay down their arms and accept the conditions of peace? Some have been led by His grace to do so, and have been reconciled to the One with whom they had been at variance. But had the heart of God to be changed, had He to be reconciled towards His guilty creature? No, God is love, and this love has been manifested in the gift of His Son. It is the heart of man that is all wrong, and not the heart of God. His appeals in the past to His wilful creature have been most touching. "Come now, let us reason

together, saith the Lord ; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." And coming down to a later day we find the heart of God unchanged, notwithstanding man's indifference to His grace ; and finally, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I am sure God is maligned when He is represented as averting His face from the beseeching sinner until such time as the prayers and tears have mollified His resentment.

Why then, it may be asked, the need of propitiation if God is love. God is light, as well as love. God is holy and righteous. He cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance or approbation, and if a sinful creature is to be brought into relationship with Him it must be in a righteous way, He cannot abate one iota the claims His holiness demands. Only infinite wisdom could have devised a way by which the apparently insuperable difficulties connected with the bringing together a holy God and a sinful creature

might be surmounted. But a meeting place has been found at the mercy seat, for an all-atoning sacrifice has been provided, and God can now righteously justify an unrighteous but repentant sinner, because of the atonement which has been made for his sins. Creation will be released from the curse under which it has fallen as the result of the creature's sin. (Col. i. 20.) Heavenly, earthly and infernal beings will eventually recognise the lordship of Jesus (Phil. ii. 10-11), but for the latter class there is no reconciliation; none either for those who in rejection of God's grace have deliberately and wilfully chosen their part with the devil and his angels.

Those who are reconciled to God by the work of the cross, sinners saved by grace, who even now are to the praise of His glory, will in the ages to come be the objects upon whom the exceeding riches of His grace will be shown forth through Christ Jesus, but the sentimental dream of some that all will be one day restored to the favor of God, or that other heresy, detracting from the value of the work of the cross, that unredeemed humanity will have no existence in eternity, have not a shadow of foundation in scripture.

CHAPTER VI.

And now we reach a momentous period in the history of the world ; a crisis in the affairs of men ; a time of which prophets, from the early history of the race, both ante and post diluvians, down to the close of inspiration, have written. The psalms and the prophecies are largely taken up with these awful judgments which are now impending, yet there are those who tell us with an ex-cathedra air that these prophetic utterances are but the expressions of vindictive hate on the part of the inspired psalmists and prophets. There can be no question as to the source from which these suggestions come. Every christian who has apprehended in the feeblest way the holiness of God, must know that the present state of unholiness in the world is intolerable to Him ; yes, but says one, we are going to convert the world ; if christians were sufficiently alive to their responsibility and would contribute more freely towards the support of the missionary cause, we would soon bring in a millenium by the conversion of the heathen. Would

to God that every soul in the world were subject to Him. Would to God that the watch-word, "China for Christ," were made good. Alas ! we know it will not be until He overturn, overturn, overturn, whose right it is ; we know that it is only when His judgments are abroad that the inhabitants of the earth will learn righteousness. From the fourth century onward, Europe has been professedly christian ; in the seventh century central Asia and China were professedly christian ; but the nineteenth century closes with less than one fourth of the inhabitants of the world taking in any way the name of Christ, less than a fifth of that fourth protesting against idolatrous worship of saints and images in connection with His holy name ; and of that twentieth only the Searcher of hearts can tell how many have life in Christ. Alas ! those who are seeking to walk with God are conscious that the numbers are few indeed.

But the hour of judgment has struck, and when the first seal of the book is broken one of the symbolic executors of these judgments calls out in tones which command attention : "Come," and a white horse comes forth bearing a rider with a bow. He goes forth conquering, and to conquer. Thus the explanation of the figure is at once given, it is conquering power. On the opening of the second seal

the second living creature says : " Come," and a red horse with its rider makes its appearance, and all the nations of the world rush into war, an awful carnage follows. When the third seal is opened, the third living creature says : " Come," and a black horse with a rider comes forth, with the result that a period of great famine succeeds ; so great that a choenix of wheat is sold for a denarius ; at that price how many are there who would be unable to buy bread. At the breaking of the fourth seal, the fourth living creature says : " Come," and a white horse with its rider comes forth ; it is death, and hades followed with him ; the natural and necessary consequence which follows in the train of the previous rider. Thus we have God's four providential judgments in succession. A great conqueror arises like Genghis Khan, or Tamerlane, those scourges of God as they were called ; then universal war, then famine, and finally pestilence. Neither of these figures present any difficulty, the state of things figured has all been more or less known in the past, indeed from having been so known it is asserted by some that the events are now historical. But that which is past may be of the character of that which is to come without being the fulfillment of the prophecy ; just as the speaking with tongues at pentecost was that which at a later day would be seen

in connection with the turning of the sun into darkness and the moon into blood.

God's four sore judgments having run their course, and the living creatures having ceased their call, we are now given to see on the breaking of the fifth seal that during their progress there had been a bitter persecution of God's people whose souls are seen under the altar. But how can it be, it may be asked, that there are saints upon earth to suffer martyrdom after the translation of the church, seeing that then all of God's children had been taken away. No doubt those now who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness will be shut out forever from God's grace because of it, after the Lord has called His own to Himself, but it is equally true that that grace can never be stayed so long as there is an object upon whom it can be exercised; and if in so-called christian nations there has been a rejection and despisal of that grace, He still sends forth His blessed message, but now to others, for we shall see in a later chapter that an angel flies in mid-heaven having the everlasting gospel to preach upon earth; nor is it at a late stage of this transitional period, but at the very beginning, for although placed much later in the prophecy I hope to be able to show that after the execution of the three series of seven-fold judg-

ments which are presented vividly and rapidly, that the Spirit of God returns, as so often seen in sacred writings, and developes more in detail, and more leisurely the various related histories in their due order and connection.

These martyred ones cry out for vengeance on their slayers, the earth-dwellers ; and are they rebuked as the disciples were who wanted to call down fire from heaven on the Christ-rejectors of their day? No, on the contrary, after a little their prayer would be answered, but in the meantime their righteous course on earth was testified to by the white robes. How evident it is that the present dispensation of grace has passed when all this takes place. A cry for vengeance now would get no response from a throne of long suffering grace ; a grace that is taken advantage of by christendom to dishonor and defame its blessed source, and then it is despised ; but the word of God says : “ Behold ye despisers and wonder and perish.”

We hear nothing more from these disembodied spirits, whose resting place is remarkable ; they are under the altar, that place of judgment where the holocaust had been consumed, but the fire of God's wrath had burned itself out upon a holy victim, and the place of judgment becomes a place of rest and security, just as the sweet singer of Israel had once sung : “ The sparrow

hath found an house and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts, my King, and my God." The human heart, so restless and so worthless, has found repose under the shadow of the cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; but later, with another class of martyrs, they are raised and become part of the first resurrection.

Whether as a response to the invocation above, or whether an epoch of a fearful character had arrived in the course of divine procedure, we see an upheaval on the opening of the sixth seal which darkens the chief and subsidiary luminaries of this sphere, casting down the lesser lights to the earth, rolling up the overhanging canopy, and removing out of their places every supposedly fixed and permanent institution. It is perhaps hardly necessary to say that all this is moral and not physical, subsequent events showing us a continuance of the things here said to be removed. The first half of this century which saw so many thrones toppling over, so much confusion and uncertainty among the nations, is a faint representation of what the resulting effect will be of opening the sixth seal. They know there is such an impending event as the day of the Lord, the day of His wrath, and they think it has come. Which way shall they turn, where

shall they flee, to escape that dies irae? Better, a thousand times better, to be crushed and buried beneath a superincumbent mountain mass than to meet those eyes of fire of the coming One whom they had insulted and outraged. Where is now the bravado that could jest about a judgment when thought to be remote or uncertain, and speak lightly of going to hell when youth and health and strength seemed to promise endless life. Terror, abject terror has seized their souls. They have been brought face to face with that which they affected to despise and the result is consternation. They are actors in a different scene, and in a different role than anticipated, and the acting is not heroic. How fearful the thought of being a part of that company, and yet some who read this book may be of it. If so, it will not be because a warning voice has not been raised. But if the invocation to the rocks and mountains were heard and the terror-stricken ones were buried even beneath Mount Blanc would they be hidden from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne? Ah! no, "though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down; and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel I will search and take them thence."

CHAPTER VII.

Six seals of the book of God's judgment have been broken, and there remains but the seventh. The devastating winds of His wrath have been blowing upon the earth but now they are momentarily restrained by angelic power until the governmental Israelitish company, destined for millennial blessing, has been sealed, together with a vast number from the nations. The seven trumpets have yet to be sounded, the seven thunders have yet to be heard, and if what has already transpired has been full of awe, who shall be able to endure what remains. Surely none but those who are divinely preserved, and we find that God has again, as in past dispensations, an elect remnant of grace, upon whom a seal is placed, and the malevolence of men or Satan is powerless against them; and those so sealed, and those only, survive the tribulation and the subsequent day of the Lord. If that is the case it may be said, how is it that Dan is here excluded, while we find that by other scriptures he has his portion with the tribes in the millennial distribution of the land.

The typical number sealed, as above remarked, has a governmental significance, and from this connection Dan is excluded. He is "a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider shall fall backward ;" and then Jacob adds : "I have waited for thy salvation O Jehovah." The connection between these expressions is not seen until Dan's unhappy idolatrous history is remembered, but if the patriarch with prophetic vision can look down the vista of coming ages and see the idolatry of his son, it but turns his own heart more fixedly to the One in whom he himself had found his salvation. There is another expression in Jacob's prophecy as to Dan, the reason for which is apprehended when the other connections are. "Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel." If the Lord, in His sovereign will, purposes to leave in the midst of Israel a standing witness, even during His glorious reign, of His abhorrence of idolatry by giving Manasses the place of Dan in Israel's supremacy over the nations of the world ; yet in grace, the assurance is given that he will not be deprived of his own tribal authority, or fail of his place in the land ; yet as he is not sealed with the tribes, having forfeited his rights, he still comes in, even although in an inferior way, and is sealed with the countless number from among the nations.

It is of the deepest interest to note the degrees of intelligence manifested among the different companies which this book presents, and the lowest of all is this vast white-robed palm-bearing multitude who can only say: "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." They have passed through much tribulation, and now at perfect rest and peace as to their circumstances, they can render thanks, for they recognise the source of their blessings.

If we should follow the bent of our natural inclinations we would like to live on the earth forever, particularly if our surroundings were congenial; for has He not set the world in our heart? And this sentiment is appealed to by many of the latter day heresies, and alas! by many who assume to be evangelical; but when we contrast the present portion of the saints of God who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, members of the body of the One who sits upon the throne, to whom have been revealed the things which neither in the past, nor in the coming age, eye had seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, with those who utter this millennial note of praise, surely every redeemed soul will say, better, a thousand times better to live in this dispensation with all its sickness and suffering and sorrow and death; with all the hatred and calumny; with even its torture and

martyrdom, and Christ known and enjoyed ; than the endless life, the freedom from sickness and death, the vine and the fig tree, and the absence of fear, with exclusion from His presence and intercourse only through an earthly and human priest.

When in that coming age glorious beings appear to the children of men, either for judgment or blessing, and they learn that those shining messengers from heaven, from the presence of God, were once poor weak sinful beings upon earth, how would their hearts thrill at the thought of being one with them ; an unrealisable conception ; and with what incredulity would they learn that when on earth those heavenly beings were thinking enviously of the portion of those who would people the renewed earth.

Another and a more intelligent note of praise follows, as the cry of the righteous victors ascends from earth to heaven, and the angels fall down before the throne and worship. The seer would know something more of this earthly company, or rather the Spirit of God inspires the question as to who they are, both to bring them into fuller light, and also to show with whom in heaven the secret of the Lord is. An elder, once a sinner upon earth, proposes the question and replies to it. They are those who have come out of the great tribulation, showing us that the section we

are now considering, before the breaking of the seventh seal, is one in which the Spirit of God interrupts the narrative of events to show anticipatively the blessed results which will have been achieved when the lord of misrule shall have been dethroned. Happy company! Neither hunger nor thirst, nor burning heat more, but fed by the Lamb, who when on earth fed thousands with a few little cakes which a lad carried; and led by Him unto living fountains of waters, where God Himself would wipe away all tears.

CHAPTER VIII.

Having finished the digression, the Spirit of God again brings us to the consideration of the last of the seals, and when it is broken there is silence in heaven for about half an hour. This is very impressive. It intensifies a scene of the deepest possible moment. In the first place there are the seven angelic trumpeters, but they stand before God ; they do nothing while the Great High Priest is officiating. Now pray observe what transpires, for it is none other than the Lord Himself who stands at the altar with the golden censer. The time has not yet arrived when He shall come forth in all His royal dignity as King of Kings ; but in angelic character He ministers as High Priest. We read that an angel appeared to Manoah and his wife, and when they were urgent to know his name he told them it was Wonderful. The prophet Isaiah says, His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Well, this Angel who has the golden censer comes to the altar and takes fire therefrom, clearly the brazen altar, for only

there was the fire burning. It was there that the fire of God's righteous judgment consumed the spotless and unblemished sacrifice, its savour grateful to Him ; forasmuch as at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, of which the brazen altar is a type, the righteousness and holiness of God were so maintained in His judgment of sin that thereafter His love and His grace could flow out unhinderedly to any and all who identified themselves by faith with that altar, that cross. The incense was burned at the golden altar with fire taken from off the brazen altar. The moral glories and excellencies of Christ shed their perfume the more, because of the fire which brought them out, and here we find much incense was offered with the prayers of all saints, and they ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

In a previous chapter the elders had been seen with golden bowls in which was the incense of the saint's prayers, but they could add nothing thereto. How blessed it will be for those tried and afflicted saints in the day that is coming, to learn from this precious book that their prayers are ascending to God, perfumed by an incense, the composition of which is of divine appointment, and how solemn the thought of the vast difference in position of the saved and the lost in that day. The angel fills the censer with fire from off the

altar, and casts it down to the earth. What is the result? Does incense now ascend? No, on the contrary, we hear voices and thunderings, and lightnings and an earthquake. There is no victim now upon earth upon whom the fires of God's wrath may descend, none as an intermediary to receive the awful stroke, but the rejecters of grace now learn from these premonitory signals that judgment, awful and dire, is impending, which nothing can avert or mitigate.

“And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.”

It is not now the silent breaking of seals, where God in providence acts unseen, but the more open and declared interposition of His mighty hand in the affairs of earth. There is evidently a division in the trumpet judgments, the last three being preceded by the woe, woe, woe, cry of the eagle, and the first four forming a series by themselves of so comprehensive a character that the symbolism of the heavens, the earth, and the depth of the sea are brought into requisition to express it. The sounding of the first trumpet brought down hail and fire, mingled with blood. The seventh plague inflicted upon Egypt for the deliverance of God's ancient people was hail mingled with fire; here there is that, and with blood. In Egypt it was literal, here probably figurative of awful judgments, not only

the bringing down of that which is lofty, but the destruction of that which is least, limited apparently to that part of the world which had been the subject of prophecy in the past, because of proximity to God's land and God's people ; the third part of the earth.

On the sounding of the second trumpet a great burning mountain is cast into the sea. The prophet Jeremiah when prophesying against Babylon speaks of her being rolled down from the rocks and made a burnt mountain, that which had been a destroying mountain, destroying all the earth. A mountain is that which expresses stability, and the sea, in figure elsewhere, the nations in confusion. If that mystic ecclesiastical system known as Babylon is here referred to, we have an intimation of its destructive power, even in the hour of its doom, but as the Spirit of God in a later portion of the book more fully develops the course and end of Babylon, I hope to return to a consideration of the subject.

The star Wormwood falls from heaven when the third trumpet is sounded ; but not as in the last, into the sea ; not into a state of national disruption, but upon those communities whose course, defined and restrained by banks which guide their flow in prescribed channels, present to us, as explained later in the prophecy, a state of things in contrast to that

which is presented by the sea. It was a great star that fell, one occupying a high but subordinate position, and outwardly in professed relationship with God ; it falls from heaven. Evidently a personage of great influence, and doubtless when he is on the scene, the saints of God, instructed by the prophecy we are considering, will know to whom the reference is, we cannot know ; and for us it is unnecessary that we should know, but we shall see later that a remarkable person arises from a settled and ordered state of things who is used to accelerate the development of all that opposes and magnifies itself against God. He is one, it is evident, who sways the minds of the people in a marvellous way, and if his career had its beginning in connection with that form of religious observances, which is being tenaciously clung to, although lifeless and heartless, then we can readily see how it is possible that that wicked man who is presently to play so important a part on the earth may be none other than the star Wormwood, and the star Wormwood, possibly, the then head of the church of Rome. However, these are merely suggestions, and the reader may consider them.

The sounding of the fourth trumpet heralds a state of things somewhat similar to that which followed the breaking of the sixth seal, only that here it is not

only that the sun and moon are darkened and the stars fall, but that they are smitten; all the greater and lesser lights which govern in the prophetic earth; and although less is said about the effects than in the previous judgment we may well suppose they are more severe, not only because of the language used, but also because we see that as the judgments proceed it is with increasing severity.

A harbinger of evil now flies in mid-heaven proclaiming in a loud voice the awful consequences which would follow the sounding of the remaining trumpets. These were to be upon the earth inhabitants. Heretofore the judgments have apparently more or less affected the people of God whose lot it has been to be in the midst of these dreadful scenes, but henceforth there is a difference. Long centuries before, when God had grievously afflicted the land of Egypt, there came a time when He said to Pharaoh: "I will put a division between My people and thy people: tomorrow shall this sign be."

CHAPTER IX.

When the pit of the abyss is opened God's sealed ones are exempt from the effects of the awful satanic irruption which follows. A marked period has evidently arrived in the course of events transpiring on the earth. The account of what succeeds is not dismissed in a few words, but is amplified in a way not before done. There is a reason for this, and as in the early chapters of Leviticus the offerings are first presented and then afterwards the law of each offering, so we have, in seeking to understand the meaning of many things in this section of our book, to look onward to the fuller opening out of these mysteries in that portion which follows the rapid sketch given which terminates at the end of the eleventh chapter. We find then an event transpires during the execution of these judgments of the greatest possible moment, none other than the casting down from heaven of that great being who in the day of his creation filled up the sum of wisdom and beauty ; and, adorned with every precious stone for a covering, he walked up and down in Eden,

the garden of God. True, it is Tyre, and the prince of Tyre of whom Ezekiel writes, but as we consider the former we see that it developes almost insensibly into a wider sphere until Tyre stands for the glory of the world ; and as we regard its prince, by the same process of mysterious transformation, we see the shadowy outlines in the back ground of the one whom the world has accepted as its god and prince. Now, the wisdom, the power, and the beauty of this great being, instead of leading to abasement in the presence of his Creator, led to pride of heart as he contemplated himself, and when pride was found in him and that spirit of exaltation which sought to advance his throne above the stars of God, he was degraded morally, and he corrupted his wisdom by reason of his brightness. Henceforth this wonderful creature became the basest of all God's intelligent beings, the embodiment of every form of evil, and the expression of its active principle, yet God, for the accomplishment of His inscrutable purposes, still permits this dreadful being to defile the heavens by his presence, and the presence of those he dragged down with him in his fall. A time is coming, however, when the Devil and his angels will be cast down from those heavenly places, and cast down into the earth, this we are told definitely ; and it is also said that he is the king of those who have

been released from the abyss. Is it, I ask, an unwarranted conclusion that the fallen star, (and note it is not "a star fallen from heaven," but a star having fallen at some undefined previous period), should be Apollyon the destroyer who leads the hosts of hell against the willingly deluded inhabitants of the earth to their destruction? However that may be, it opened the pit of the abyss and smoke, as the smoke of a furnace ascended therefrom, darkening the sun and the air. Any moral perception that may have remained after all that had passed was now beclouded, even that which should have been the supreme governing power becomes itself darkened, and the way thus prepared for a new and strange creature to accomplish a work of such character that the mere record of it is terrifying. It is said that locusts came out of the smoke, but when they are described there is nothing in their appearance to connect them with that destructive insect, so that the comparison may be in what they do, rather than in what they are; and here again we find that instead of the blackening of the earth through the destruction of every kind of verdure, the result of locust devastation, that no green thing is to be hurt, yet these released demons come up from their long time prison house in such vast numbers that they can only be likened to the clouds of locusts whose coming

is the terror of eastern countries. When the Lord was upon earth some from the abyss or elsewhere were for the time set at liberty, and when we remember that one man could be possessed by at least two thousand we may have some faint conception of what a general jail delivery of infernal beings would be. The armies of locusts destroy all that would be for food, but how awful their visitation if instead of that they were armed with the stings of scorpions and had an appearance that would strike terror into the stoutest heart. We must suppose that all this description is figurative and moral in application and as no figure can equal the thing figured, the reality of it all, in which some who read these pages may one day be found, will be awful in the extreme. There are those above who have been crowned with crowns of gold, these will assume to be so, but their crowns are a mere imitation, a sort of dutch metal, and although there is the manly face there is the womanly hair. Let none however suppose that the crowns, the faces, and the hair are indicative of a weakness that may be resisted ; no, there were invulnerable breast-plates, there was the terrifying sound of horses and chariots rushing to battle, and stings from the tails of these monsters worse than death itself, and finally we find at their head the great enemy of God, of Christ, and of the saints, that old serpent the Devil.

What the full meaning of all these symbols may be we can only conjecture, but the sealed ones, the servants of God will know in that day, and the scriptures we are now considering will be to their comfort and guidance.

The sixth angel sounded, and now a voice from the four horns of the golden altar is heard, that altar from which incense ascended as a sweet savour to God, but now it is the strength of the altar and not communion that is in view. If vast armies are coming on the scene, an unseen power has released the hitherto restraining influences, and the devastation and destruction which follow, although apparently altogether of man, the instructed ones know to be the awful judgments of God.

And now four angels who had been bound at the great river Euphrates are released from bondage, but as a matter of fact it will not be supposed that there are four angels now bound there, but as so much is symbolism in what we are considering, there is no question that this expression is figurative, but what does it figure? The term angel, as we have seen, is not only applied to the spiritual beings in relationship with us, but may be also to a messenger or a representative ; it is evidently so here, but whom do they represent? As to the churches it seems clear enough who the

angels are, but as to these there is but one connection, they are at the Euphrates. When Daniel saw four wild beasts come up out of the sea, diverse one from another, he is told that these beasts are the four great nations that were successively to rise and fall during that period when Jehovah was not in outward relationship with an earthly people. When Nebuchadnezzar at an earlier time saw in his dream a composite figure of a man, the prophet interpreted it also as a figure of these four kingdoms; and when, nearly a hundred years later, Zechariah lifted up his eyes and saw four horns, and four carpenters come to fray them, he was told that thus the horns of the gentiles which were lifted up over the land of Judah would be frayed. He also saw four chariots come out from between two brasen mountains, which again were the four gentile monarchies; and however self-contained and self-asserting they might appear to be, they were really providentially directed from between God's immovable judgments. It would seem that the four angels at the Euphrates are also the representatives of the four gentile kingdoms, long restrained, but again at the last revived, and in such manner as that they can be ground to powder by the stone cut out without hands which subsequently becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth.

A question may be raised here as to the revival of the kingdom of Babylon which has been doomed to perpetual desolation ; for while other ancient places and countries have been made partially desolate for a time, Babylon is to-day a striking and permanent example of the literal fulfilment of prophecies uttered against it twenty six centuries ago, for it is not inhabited or dwelt in ; the Arabian does not pitch his tent there, nor shepherds make their fold ; but wild beasts of the desert lie there, and the ruins are full of doleful creatures. I wish to anticipate the objection. I do not for a moment suppose that the kingdom of Babylon itself will be resuscitated ; not only because of the prophecies above referred to, but also because the judgments thereon had been so sweeping and destructive that the angel could say to Zechariah that those who had gone towards the north country had quieted his spirit there. Yet Babylon comes into judgment before God, as we shall see later, and how then is this apparent contradiction explained ?

Babylon of old was the source from which sprung, and the centre from which radiated the idolatries which spread themselves over the contiguous asiatic countries ; she became the mother of daughters more wicked and more brasen if possible than herself ; and if the literal kingdom of Babylon is not to arise again, its ecclesi-

astical counterpart is even now in existence, and it will be, at the last, one aspect which the fourth monarchy will present ; indeed, so distinct will be this presentation that we shall see as we proceed to the consideration of later chapters how the ecclesiastical completely dominates the civil side of this last great kingdom, at least up to a certain period ; and thus the first and last of these kingdoms in a way coalesce, while at the same time the distinction is clearly defined. This then is, I am convinced, the true explanation of the last appearance of the four wild beasts, or the four horns when they are to be finally frayed. Persia, Greece and Rome exist to-day ; and so also does the mystic Babylon, and all will be destroyed when the King comes into whose hands all kingdoms, all principalities, all powers are to be committed.

The four angels were prepared for the hour, day, month and year, to slay the third part of men. What definiteness there is in all God's ordering, and how remarkably the actors take their places in their several parts at the exact moment of time that they are needed. "Thou shalt go on forward from thence," said the prophet to the man whom he had anointed, "and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves

of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine ; and they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread, which thou shalt receive of their hands. After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines ; and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them ; and they shall prophesy ; and the Spirit of Jehovah will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man." This is the simple prophetic narrative ; and the circumstances are of the simplest character, yet what unseen controlling power set all these different personages in motion at a particular moment ; put it into their minds to carry the various things enumerated, and to dispose of them in a manner that they should be inclined to do ; so that while every movement, every thought had a distinct individuality, a distinct responsibility in itself, yet above it all was a guidance so amazing, so incomprehensible, so infinite in wisdom and in power, that as we contemplate it, wonder gives place to adoration and we fall down in worship before the great and Holy Being who, directing all things, has revealed Himself to us, His creatures, in the most endearing relationship of Father. Oh my God, surely thy name is Love !

When the angels are loosed, behold, we see not angels but an army of two myriads of myriads of horsemen. We are approaching now the end of the awful events which have been transpiring on the earth, and in the combination of moral and physical elements of destruction which follow the sounding of the sixth trumpet, we have a picture which we look upon with awe, but which we are sensible, that of the full meaning, we have but the faintest conception. Vast armies are put in motion, and although this is no new thing in itself in the history of the world, yet these are so directly energized by satanic power that the sulphurous flames of the pit surround them ; fire and jacinth and brimstone form their breast-plates, their horses are leonine and vomit forth fire and smoke and brimstone, there is the irresistible conquering power and at the same time the awful moral effects of their progress, for the power of the horses is in their mouth and in their tails ; fire and brimstone precede them ; the bite of the serpent follows , and the third part of men are killed, yet the effect upon the survivors is not the repentance which might be expected, they continue their demon worship, their idolatry, and their desperate wickedness.

The first woe trumpet was awful in character, but the second exceeds it in every particular concluding

with the serpent headed tails and the unlimited venomous period.

If the Lord permit, I shall return to the further consideration of the effects of all these great events when we come to follow the fuller development of them in a later part of the book.



CHAPTER X.

Chapter ten, and the first fourteen verses of chapter eleven come in parenthetically before the sounding of the final woe trumpet, but they are of immense importance. A mighty angel comes down from heaven, evidently the Lord Himself in angelic character as all the accessories go to show. The shekinah, the rainbow upon His head ; His face shining like the sun, as upon the holy mount ; His feet as pillars of fire as when He walked among the candlesticks, all speak of the only One to whom they could attach.

The position taken is remarkable. He sets His right foot upon the sea and His left on the earth, He has in His hand a little book open, and He cried with a loud voice as the roaring of a lion. All this, it need hardly be said, is symbolical, but what does it symbolise ? We shall see in the development part of our book, which we must somewhat anticipate, that two men have come into great prominence before the period with which we are now occupied, one having

arisen at a time of general national confusion, and the other, after order had been re-established, acquires power and place through ecclesiastical position, and both of these are the direct agents of Satan by whom they are energised in a remarkable way; they are the representatives on earth of the one who has been received by the world as its god and prince. Now one of these, whom the Spirit of God designates as wild beasts, arises out of the sea, the other out of the land, and God has allowed it all; has allowed this trinity of evil to become rampant, and every phase of iniquity to be manifested in its most hideous form; why, has been a mystery, but the revelation of the reason is about to be made, and every created intelligence in God's universe will see how infinite the wisdom which has allowed sin to work out its own destiny, the righteousness which has judged and condemned it, and the infinite power which has at length triumphed in this stupendous conflict of good and evil, putting down the author of iniquity, and finally, after giving him a short respite, again consigning him and his deluded victims to an irrevocable fate, an eternal duration. Now this wicked being had claimed authority over all the race of men, and the power of death was his, but the usurper is to be overthrown and the rightful Sovereign declares that there shall be no more delay. All things are His by

right of creation, the heathen are His by inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth are His possession, and the time has about arrived when it will be made good, first by the complete destruction of His enemies, then by the blessings which He will bring in for the renewed earth. The seer takes the little open book and eats it, as he is told to do, and finds it sweet as honey to the taste, for it is the word of God, but the after effects were bitterness, it was judgment. The breaking of the seals; the setting in motion of God's providential dealings with man in judgment, could only be done by One who had acquired the right, as Son of Man, to do so, but the open and manifest ways of God in direct and unmistakable dealing could be committed to, and proclaimed by an apostle, a man among men. But how does it come to pass that he is yet to prophesy before many people and nations and kings? Just as we saw in the first chapter how the mysterious intimation in the gospel that John should tarry till the Lord's second coming is being fulfilled in his continuation with the church during its subsequent career, through his prophetic writings, so here the record of those coming events would make them a living reality in all eyes, whether those most interested would hear, or whether they would forbear.

CHAPTER XI.

A reed like unto a rod was given the prophet, and he was instructed to measure the temple and the altar and them that worship therein. What a remarkable instruction, inasmuch as in the first place the temple of God is non-existent, for whatever efforts the Jews may make at rebuilding, God is not with them in it, and the Branch it is who builds the temple after this period. Nor is there any uncertainty about the measurement of either of the altars; and as to the measurement of those who worship therein, the literal acceptance would have no meaning. Evidently then, it is the moral state of the remnant in communion with God that is to be taken knowledge of, and if so, then it is the golden altar, but the outer court God takes no account of, those who are trampling it under foot are not in relationship with Him, but the period of this defilement is coterminous with the testimony of the two witnesses; with the period in which the times and laws are given into the hands of the fourth beast; a time, and times, and the dividing of time spoken of

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by Daniel ; and the time, times, and half a time, during which the woman is nourished in the wilderness which the twelfth chapter of this book speaks of.

Two witnesses are now introduced without explanation as to who they are, or whence they come, and although in a sense it is expressive of completeness of testimony which the godly remnant shall be giving, yet the history of these two witnesses preclude the thought of any general application. Theirs is a sorrowful testimony, yet they are God's witnesses, the Lord of the earth ; they are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, the expression of the power and energy of the Holy Spirit, light bearers in the midst of universal darkness. They have power to stay the rain, as well as to turn the waters into blood, and these things did Elijah and Moses of old. The former is definitely promised before the great and dreadful day of the Lord, but the word is silent as to who the other may be. The mystery of iniquity is not yet completed, and God, for His own wise purposes allows them to be put to death by the power which has arisen, apparently out of the chaotic state of the nations which formed the Roman empire, really from the abyss, and if their testimony has been for three years and a half there is a corresponding period of three days and a half to make perfectly manifest the futility of their work as to

any moral effect upon the nations of the world ; their dead bodies are treated with every indignity, for the earth-dwellers are so blinded of Satan that they see no farther than the instruments, and attribute all their calamities to them, as Ahab did to this same Elijah centuries before.

How utterly futile it is to strive against God. Man may vainly imagine he has silenced God's witnessess and yet they continue to rise up to his dismay and discomfiture.

These stand upon their feet after a brief period of senseless rejoicing on the part of their enemies, and, called up to heaven, they ascend in a cloud before all. This indeed was a cause of fear, as anything supernatural is, but it is only when a great earthquake destroys a tenth part of the city and seven thousand people, when they themselves are in peril, that their thoughts go up to the God of heaven. Many of us have seen illustrations of this in profligate men being brought face to face with death and crying out to God for relief, with many promises of a better life, and when the relief is granted and the danger past it is all forgotten ; there has been no work either in heart or conscience, and the last state of that man is often worse than the first. And Jerusalem, that city of the Great King, what a history is hers ! Endowed and enriched

as a centre of blessing to the whole earth, a place where God had come down to meet and dwell with man, its blessings and its renown were used for its own exaltation ; to exalt itself indeed against the Author of these very blessings and to reject Him when He came in grace and truth, so that He could but weep over the city where He had specially set His name. It was a continued course of declension until its downward progress came to a conclusion in its utter destruction. Yet it rose again, it is to become great, but what is the mind of the Spirit as to this greatness? Spiritually it is Sodom and Egypt ; corruption the grossest, and worldliness the most pronounced in opposition to God ; but there is another characteristic ; “where also our Lord was crucified.” Surely this would be sufficient for such an abiding curse upon the spot that there could be no revivification ! That no effort of man could ever efface the stain of blood upon it, or blot out the awful crime of the deliberate murder of God’s dear Son, none the less awful, indeed the more so, from having been judicial. But the grace of God is so amazing that the place where our Lord was crucified becomes the centre from which refreshing streams of millennial blessing flow forth to the remotest parts of the earth, and all eyes, all hearts will turn towards Jerusalem, and men shall say ; “ Let us go up, I will go also.”

The sounding of the third woe trumpet, the seventh and last of the series, brings to a close God's judicial dealings with the earth, for in the eternal state to which the eighteenth verse leads us, reigning has ceased and righteousness dwells forever. The elders are alone here and in the fullest intelligence of divine actings, they fall on their faces and worship, because the kingdom of Christ is set up over the earth; Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai reigns; elsewhere we shall find details. He comes visibly to the earth accompanied with His saints whom in grace He has identified with Himself in government. The heathen may rage and the people imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against Jehovah and against His anointed; yet the heathen have been given Him for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession, and He proceeds to dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. And then the last great assize is set, the dead small and great stand before God, and those destroyers of the earth are destroyed.

In this last presentation we have reached the conclusion of God's dealings with the earth and its inhabitants in time. We have seen how this dispensation of grace which began with the most striking manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power, a dispensa-

tion unique in itself, in that during its continuance the Holy Spirit took up His abode upon the earth, dwelling in the church corporately and in individuals, soon declined from its exalted position, and finally was rejected as a light bearer in the world. The question naturally arises, what are the causes which led to such deplorable results? How is it that the precepts and example of the blessed Lord in His walk upon earth, the written word, the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit have not maintained the testimony at the altitude of its first blessed presentation? The causes are various, their workings complex, and while the ruin at the end is patent, it is difficult to apportion to the several producing causes their respective parts in the rapidly moving and changing scene.

We see in past dispensations, in the present, and in the coming one, that there is a certain responsibility committed to man, in the first place individually, and then in the aggregate, God allowing man to work out his own salvation apparently unrestrained. There is not only the tremendous struggle of good and evil in the world, but in every saint of God there exists these two opposing principles; and this world is the arena in which the great combat between the opposing forces has been brought to an issue. As in all great battles the fortunes of war seem at times to favor one of the

combatants and then the other, so in this the good seems at times well nigh crushed out of the earth, only to arise again with renewed power and energy. Now on the one side we see arrayed the world, the flesh, and the devil, and in opposition to these, respectively, the Father, the Holy Spirit and Christ; the earth is the scene, the heart of man the place of the conflict. The children of God, even the babes, know the Father, a relationship which did not exist in the past, will not in the future; a relationship which implies a change of abode, for the Father's house is the destined home for His children, although the world may have a counter and present attraction for the heart; and just in the degree that the world and its allurements are allowed to sway and dominate the affections, the heart finds a lessening joy in the thought of the heavenly inheritance.

The Holy Spirit is ever occupied with Christ and ever bringing Him before the soul of the believer, and in the degree that there is occupation with Him, there is the transforming power which changes the saint into His moral likeness, but in every believer there is the nature in which he was born, which is called the flesh, and this nature seeks its gratification in material and sensuous things which leads into direct conflict with the Spirit, who is presenting unseen and spiritual things.

Finally there is the great enemy whose power is for the present permitted until at last all the opposing forces arrayed against the good have been allowed to manifest their awful character, and the judgment which then intervenes and closes the lists will commend itself to every created intelligence in heaven, earth and hell. Now this great power, fallen indeed and degraded morally, is always in direct and deadly hostility to Christ. When He was born he sought His destruction, and at last the devil apparently conquered at the cross of Christ, but the conquest was really a defeat, for the One who went down into death burst its bands and rising out of it annulled thereby the power of him who had the power of death, and not only was this true as to Himself, but He opened a door for all His own who thereafter should be called upon to pass through death.

This then is the great trinity of evil, and while distinct in character, yet as the tendency of each is the alienation of the heart of man from God and thus all working to a common end, the distinctness becomes merged or interwoven, if not in inception and action at least in effect, and when we undertake to apportion the cause of the ruin into which we see the church of Christ has fallen, among the authors of that ruin, we soon learn how impossible the sub-division is; still

there are certain marked features and we find that into the hearts of those who had overcome the wicked one the Spirit of God foresees the danger of the entrance of the world and warns against it. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." While the thought of the Lord's coming was fresh before the hearts of the saints at the beginning of the age, there was a distinct line of demarkation from the world, but as this blessed hope waned there came in by insensible degrees a conformity to worldly ways and an allowance of carnal desires, pleasant indeed to the natural heart, but warring against the soul. To an angel these things would present no attraction, but in man there is a nature which responds to them, and the flesh is the soil in which they grow luxuriantly. Given these conditions it needs but the cultivator to ensure a crop, and the devil knows well how to make use of the appliances ready at his hand for the overthrow of souls ; he uses with exceeding skill and unwearied energy, the world to the allurements of the flesh, and the flesh to the cultivation and embellishment of the world, until the desire for the heavenly inheritance becomes enfeebled, then wearisome, then distasteful, and the child of God, in ways, in speech, and in association is indistinguishable from earth-dwellers.

The fatal error of baptismal regeneration which found its way into the church at a very early age, and upheld by men whose piety and devotion cannot be questioned, had the effect of making christianity hereditary, and the ranks became filled with unbelievers. The favor of the world and the domination of a wicked ecclesiasticism completed the work of destruction, and the church, so beautiful at first, a chaste virgin espoused to Christ, became a hideous caricature of its early days. We sometimes see a young lad of such attractive personal appearance and such ingenuous and winning ways that our hearts are won to him at sight, but twenty or thirty years later we meet a besotted and degraded man upon whose face licentiousness and intemperance have set their mark in such manner that all traces of the lovely youth have been defaced, and we are repelled rather than attracted.

How sad, how inexpressibly sad, that the church which should have been a testimony for Christ in the world, presenting an unbroken front to the enemy, should now be seen in numberless companies, not only acting independently one of another, but frequently in relentless hostility ; the evidence that the Father had sent the Son destroyed, the authority of Christ practically rejected ; the presence of the Holy Spirit ignored ; and the very revelation of God's holy will,

the precious book which He has given us, attacked by His professed servants all along the line of the profession, and in every part of its blessed communications from Genesis to Revelation.

The last verse of the eleventh chapter takes us back to begin again in detail a more developed history of what we have been considering, with related subjects and a revelation of the hidden springs and influences which have led on to a crisis of such magnitude that the whole course of things throughout the world has been completely changed ; that is, speaking apocalyptically, for the vision is a revelation of things still future. To this then the last verse of chapter eleven is introductory, and if in a previous chapter we have seen God's gracious reminder in the bow of His covenant with the earth, here His earthly people are reminded of His covenant relationship with them, in the ark, and in the temple, however awful the character of His judgments upon His enemies may be. The figurative character of our book is very marked here, for as a matter of fact there is neither temple nor altar in heaven, yet the figure strikingly brings before us the ways of God ; on earth His acts may be seen.

CHAPTER XII.

And now the Spirit of God takes us back nineteen hundred years to the birth of Christ, to the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, "unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given," uttered seven hundred years before, and in the presentation bringing vividly before us the dream of Joseph a thousand years before that again. It is clearly Israel that is referred to, "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." Looked at from the side of the earth, we see as yet neither sun nor moon nor a crown of twelve stars, this is in purpose, but we see a woman travailing in birth and pained to be delivered. The throes into which the nation was cast by the preaching of John was remarkable. A moral re-adjustment in cutting down and levelling up, prepared in the desert a highway for God in the person of Jesus. The glory of Jehovah was to be revealed and all men mused in their hearts, whether John were not himself the Christ. But the woman brought forth her Son, not the church surely, for the bride is in figure taken from

the side of the sleeping Adam. The blood and water that flowed from the side of a dead Christ, as the rib of old, was the foundation for the building of the helpmeet. As to Christ, it is the man from the woman, as to the church it is the woman from the man.

Another wonder is seen in heaven, a great red dragon, a monster, having seven heads and ten horns, and a crown upon each head, stands ready to devour the child, the long promised seed of the woman. What this great red dragon is was fully explained to the prophet Daniel in his day by one of those who stood by. "Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, and the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise; and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings."

How great the contrast of things as viewed from heaven or viewed from earth. Here a great kingdom had arisen with a hundred and twenty millions of subjects; nearly the entire civilized population of the time. Prosperity was universal; the arts and sciences flourished; men were living whose renown has spread through all lands, and whose works still remain as models of perspicuity, diction, and matter. It was called the golden age, and numbers of books have been written extolling the

glories of the reign of Augustus, under whom Rome had ceased to be a republic and became an empire. Herod the great, whom the romans had allowed to assume royal dignity, represented the empire at Jerusalem, and by him the temple of Zerubbabel which had fallen into ruins was rebuilt in great magnificence, so much so that the Lord's disciples could call His attention to it and connected buildings. Herod's crimes in destroying the lives, not only of his enemies, but of those who were bound to him by the nearest ties of relationship, show us of what stuff the world's heroes are made, and it was this man, the representative of the great roman power who gave the command from his death bed for the destruction of the little children of two years of age and under in the village of Bethlehem, that with them He that was born King of the jews might perish. This is as things appear here in looking at the great roman empire, but going behind the scenes the Spirit of God sums it all up as a great red dragon standing ready to devour the man Child. And well may it be said to be red, for the blood of the martyrs of Jesus has flown in torrents through the streets of the imperial city, which God has silently allowed, and as silently recorded.

But the man Child was born, and soon will break the nations with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces

like a potter's vessel, meantime He is caught up unto God and to His throne and the woman escapes to the wilderness, but it is many centuries after, where for three and a half years she is miraculously sustained. Now occurs that which might seem confusing at first sight but is really not so, for the great red dragon is seen to be none other than Satan, how then can he be Rome? The explanation is simple enough and will appear somewhat later when we shall see that it is expressly stated that this fourth and last great kingdom is energised directly by Satan.

Going back again to old testament scriptures we find that the prophet Daniel speaks of the cutting off of the Messiah after sixty and nine sevens, which was literally fulfilled, and that another week or seven awaits fulfilment, and that it begins to run from the time that a covenant is made between the head of the revived roman empire, whose people destroyed the city and the sanctuary, and the jews who had returned to their own land; the many, unbelievers. The middle of this covenanted period is an important epoch. Several events of the greatest moment occur, and while the order of their occurrence is not clear, it would seem that they are almost simultaneous.

After the translation of the church, a professedly christian form of worship continues which a later

chapter gives us the record of, and at the same time a jewish ritual and service has been established at Jerusalem. Now a diversity of religions is a source of weakness in a kingdom, as a common religion is a source of strength. This Nebuchadnezzar saw and sought to make himself a common object of worship. The last head of the roman empire will do the same and adopt a similar expedient, but to accomplish this the two leading forms of worship must be suppressed, and a bitter persecution against judaism and psuedo christianity ensues. Among the former there is a remnant of grace, and this remnant is under God's direct protecting care ; the latter is a nauseous thing ; a corruption of God's most blessed work of grace upon earth, and wholly given up to judgment. But while this is taking place upon earth, another and an amazing scene is transpiring in heaven. Satan and his angels have long defiled the heavenly places. The philistines in Canaan are a type of this. But the time has arrived when they must be cast down, and the heavens changed, and Michael that exalted being, a prince and an archangel, the head of angelic hosts, and, so far as we know, the greatest of created intelligences in heaven, engages in battle with that old serpent the devil and his hosts to their utter and final discomfiture. He had been the unceasing accuser of

the brethren before God, and on earth he had apparently been victorious over them and had put them to death, but there was a moral victory, and it was theirs. One had been down into death before and for them, and He it was who had the keys of death and of hades, how could they be held therein? The blood of the slain Lamb, that which to the natural mind is only an expression of the most utter weakness, is to faith an irresistible power, and in this strength the Lord's hosts go forth to battle and to assured victory.

We speak of the heavens being changed, but the reality of it exceeds anything that the human mind can conceive. Far back in eternity the fall of the anointed cherub that covereth, whom God had expressly appointed as such, with all the angels who joined him, was a most important event. God's long forbearance with such an arch-rebel was amazing, yet God had a purpose in allowing the nefarious work of Satan to continue, and when this purpose as to the heavens is accomplished the accuser is cast down, but who can imagine the consequences of such an invasion upon the inhabitants of the earth; unrestrained satanic power will be awful indeed, but there is a remnant upon whom the eye of God ever rests. Satan may organize a great movement against this remnant, but how futile, the One who taketh up the mountains as a

very little thing can frustrate the movement by natural means, and He does so.

Thus we see in this comprehensive chapter an unfolding of the greatest mysteries. God's ancient people under the figure of a woman are presented, and in the full administrative glory of the millennial reign crowned with twelve stars. All subordinate and merely reflective power is under her feet, but this is future, meantime Christ is born of her, and, preserved from the rage of the dragon, is caught up to God's throne. The work of redemption, and the bride of the Lamb are not before us, nor the translation of the saints. When the Lord's people are caught up it is to occupy a place with Him upon His throne as Son of man, not surely upon the throne of God, besides it is altogether another connection here. Then we see the great red dragon which had essayed to destroy the Child, afterwards seeks to destroy the mother, in the first place the roman power at the instigation of Satan, but at the last, while still through the same instrumentality, yet more directly and immediately under his guidance and by his power, and this act is spoken of as his. The war in heaven precedes this persecution, but God's ancient people are miraculously protected and nourished during the space of time between the denunciation of the treaty which had been made by the

roman emperor with the jews, and the coming of the Lord to the earth, three and a half years, and during the same period the two witnesses are giving their testimony. In the next succeeding chapters we shall see a fuller opening out of the prophecy of these amazing events.



CHAPTER XIII.

I do not propose to take up the disputed question as to whether it was the prophet or the dragon who stood upon the sand of the sea ; the point is not so much who was observing as what was being observed. The prophet stands upon the shore and looking out over a boundless expanse of turbulent waters, sees a wonderful sight that commands his rapt attention ; a wild beast of frightful appearance rises out of the sea. We are not left in any doubt as to the meaning of this figure for centuries before the prophet Daniel had seen in a dream the same beast arise from the same source, and the explanation is given to him, that the four wild beasts he saw arise were the four great successive world monarchies, the last of which being the roman empire, and the great red dragon of the previous chapter, which we have been considering. At that time the four winds of heaven burst forth upon the great sea, and it is matter of history that the nations then existing were disturbed at the time that the first of these wild beasts, Babylon, emerged from the confusion. All this simplifies the explanation of

the imagery used in our chapter, but another difficulty presents itself, for while in the twelfth, thirteenth, and seventeenth chapters of our book this wild beast has seven heads and ten horns, and in Daniel also ten horns, yet in the twelfth chapter the diadems with which it was crowned were seven in number and upon the heads, here there are ten diadems and they are not upon the heads but upon the horns. Passing over the second verse in which this wild beast is seen to have all the untamed characteristics of his three predecessors, we learn that one of its heads was wounded to death, and yet, to the wonderment of the world this deadly wound is healed. In this we shall find the explanation of the crowned heads and crowned horns. The government of Rome was first under kings, then consuls, then dictators, then decemvirs, then military tribunes, then emperors, and the coming form will still be imperial, yet federal, as we now see in the german empire. The imperial has been wounded apparently beyond the possibility of resuscitation, but it will again arise, and while the Spirit of God views the beast here in its entirety, yet historically the various forms of government were consecutive and the crowns were upon each of the heads as they developed, but at the last the union of the ten confederated kingdoms, not one power but ten united powers, shows us the crowns upon the horns.

Going back again to Daniel we find a man of no great importance at first, as it would seem, yet who gets the chief place in this federation, and three of the kings resisting apparently his authority, are overthrown and the head of the confederation becomes also the king of these three component parts.

The question arises when does this take place, before or after the translation of the saints? but it is impossible to give an answer to the question as the only data we have before the middle of Daniel's last week is the covenant which the roman emperor makes with the jews who have returned to their own land, and which is for seven years, so that he must be in power before the beginning of the week of tribulation; and then the question arises, what length of time elapses between the rapture of the saints and the beginning of the last seven years, but here again scripture is silent, yet inasmuch as the actors in the last great events have nearly all taken their places, while the remainder are in view, the inference is that if the upheaval of the nations does not take place before the translation it will be immediately after. Russia, the Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal of Ezekiel is now present, and although but recently, comparatively, formed into a kingdom, yet we not only see herself but her confederates, or most of them,

already arrayed at her side. The king of the north will be seen just as soon as it answers Russia's purposes to make Armenia into an independent kingdom, and Russia's convenience will be God's time. Egypt's great prosperity is that of the king of the south, and the semi-barbarous tribes of Greece have only in this century been welded into a community. Italy, the roman kingdom, has been formed from a number of petty kingdoms within the memory of persons now living who have passed middle age. The treaty of Berlin which gave Cyprus to Great Britain, gave at the same time a significance to the prophecy as to the ships of Chittim which did not previously exist.

The return of the jews to Palestine in unbelief, of which Isaiah prophesied, is even now going on. But if the geographical and political changes which have been taking place are startling, the social and religious are not less so, for in every civilized country we see in what manner secret societies have undermined the whole social fabric, and finally we see a most remarkable and unexpected advance of roman catholicism; now both these latter influences are clearly set forth in the scriptures which speak of the last days, and I only refer here to the existing state of things in the world for the purpose of showing that all things are now ripe for the concluding events of this eventful age—that

any day, any hour, the Lord may be expected for His saints, and that thereafter no lengthy period need necessarily elapse before the beginning of the awful series of divine judgments revealed to us in this apocalyptic book.

The politico-religious device meets with success, and all the world is ready for the new religion. It would appear to be first put out tentatively and probably before the attempted suppression of other forms of worship, but the notable man who is to be at the head of the greatest confederation the world has yet seen has behind him a controller of super-human wisdom and power so that the worship accorded to the emperor is in reality a worship of Satan. He will be an exceedingly able man, and his power will be overwhelming; now when such an one openly speaks against God and against God's people, at the same time succeeding in all his enterprises perfectly, the human heart, which is always at enmity to God, is quite ready to throw off a merely professed allegiance to Him, which fear has instigated, for subjection to any one who is able to maintain a position of independency and hostility towards God. At whatever period these new views may have been advanced it is in the middle of the eventful shabua that they are proclaimed, and subjection to them made imperative. But there are

those who are not deceived ; a poor contemptible little company, probably made up for the most part of those who have no weight or influence in the community, but their names were written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb. Ye see your calling brethren, it is the poor of this world rich in faith, who are made heirs of the kingdom.

Besides the dragon and his human agent there is another man who comes forward to make up the most infamous trio conceivable, and although second in importance to the first wild beast, as things appear in this world, he is the one with whom the Spirit of God elsewhere is more especially occupied, as he is the one more particularly connected at the last with God's people and God's land. He has been referred to before as possibly the star Wormwood, and if this inference should be found to be correct his sudden elevation and his wide spread influence will be accounted for. Wormwood has been evidently an exalted ecclesiastical dignitary, professedly connected with heavenly things, and universally accepted, at least in the roman earth, as a spiritual leader. This man, giving up every pretence of God worship, and taking up ardently the new religion, becomes at once the able coadjutor the roman emperor requires to make his religion a success, and he confers upon him

great power and authority. He does not come on the scene until the empire has become established, at least not in this character, and although power is given him, his exercise of it at first is gentle and lamb like, yet the instructed know, when they hear his words, that he is the devil's mouth-piece. He is the antichrist of scripture; the one who comes in his own name whom the people would receive; the false prophet who prophesies lies; the wicked one to be revealed whom the Lord will destroy with the brightness of His coming; the idol shepherd who will not feed the flock; and at the last the king for whom the fires of tophet are made hot.

If the inception of the new religion is with the roman emperor, the development, the systematizing, and the putting into effect of its principles are left to the able man who has not only the power of execution committed to him, but is also allowed of God to exercise miraculous powers which he has received from his master the devil. Nothing is more effective for controlling minds, or more awe inspiring in the world than an exhibition of super-human power, and it is the pretence of this that sets up shrines, and opens communications with departed spirits. No doubt the devil helps his agents now as much as he is permitted to do, but then, God will allow him to put forth many

a strong delusion in order that those who would not believe the truth may believe a lie for their deserved destruction. But, some one may ask, if miracles were wrought before us now, if fire were brought down from heaven, and a mere image, the work of men's hands given power to speak, how could it be known that the miracles were not of God. The apostle says by the Spirit : "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And again, we have in Isaiah : "And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We have the written word of God, and everything must be judged by it, whatsoever then is not in accordance with the precepts contained therein, however much it may be accredited, must be utterly rejected. The blessed Lord came doing many wonderful works, but His credentials were not in these merely, but in the fact that He came in fulfilment of prophecy and did the works which the Spirit of God had recorded of Him centuries before.

The pressure upon every individual to accept this anthropomorphism will be, to all but the saints, irresistible. A sample of it, in a small way, has been recently seen in Ireland, and if a few individuals by conspiring could make boycotting a terror in a neighborhood, how impossible it would be for any to resist when a powerful government demands as a condition for buying or selling the very necessaries of life, that the insignia of the new religion be displayed. What may be the meaning of the mystical figures it is useless now to discuss, as it has long been matter of controversy, and while important for cotemporaries to know is not of the same interest to us ; suffice it that there is a trinity of evil, and unitedly or separately it is manifest to all who are wise that the number which indicates completeness is never attained.

CHAPTER XIV.

The seer looks out again and sees a Lamb on mount Zion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand having His name and His Father's name on their foreheads. No one asks who they are or whence they come. Many had just now received the beast's impression, these bear before all the Father's stamp, being in number expressive of governmental perfection multiplied into itself a thousand times, and as there could not be two separate companies endowed with supreme control it follows that the company here before us are those who had been previously sealed, but here presented under different circumstances, with different surroundings, and with further details of position. Before, their standing was not recorded although that of the white robed multitude was, here they are on mount Zion, how blessed. Sinai, a mount in Arabia which gendereth to bondage, with all its terrors, is past. Their standing before God was not on the mount which burned with fire, where was blackness and darkness and a tempest, and the sound

of a trumpet and the voice of words which they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more, but they were come unto mount Zion where God's grace towards His people was manifested through David the king, type of David's Son and David's Lord who will reign before His ancients gloriously. God will not again cast man upon his responsibility to work out a righteousness which the weakness of the flesh prevents, and although the blessed period of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit is past, yet God has still rich blessing for His people. He will give them a new heart ; He will put a new spirit within them ; He will take away the stony heart out of their flesh and will give them a heart of flesh ; He will put His Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in His statutes, to keep His judgments ; He will give them the land of their fathers for a possession and will be their God. The unnumbered white robed multitude may only know that they are saved out of all their troubles and give God the glory for it, but these have more intelligence, they can sing the song of redemption, they are guileless, undefiled, and without fault, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb. A vast population will inhabit the earth under Messiah's peaceful reign, but these tribulation saints will have a place of their own, having learned the grace of God in

a special way, and they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Happy people ; blessed saints of God !

Next we have the preaching of the everlasting gospel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. The Lord's commission to His disciples after His resurrection was that they should go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Before His crucifixion He had said : " This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all the nations ; and then shall the end come ; " but before this He had sent forth the twelve apostles with conferred powers, to testify of Him, with this remarkable declaration : " Verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. " Again, when He shall sit on the throne of His glory and the nations are gathered before Him, the judgment of the goats upon His left hand is because of their rejection of His messengers and His message which they bore. All this is simple and unmistakable, and so far from confirming the general belief that the Lord will not come until the gospel is universally preached, it says quite the contrary. When the twelve are sent forth at the beginning of the Lord's ministry or get their final commission after His resurrection, they are looked at as the ones who go on to His return although many

long centuries intervene, and they themselves have passed off the scene ; it is the same line of testimony although not the same individuals, just as it is with the virgins who go to sleep and waken ages after. They were to go into all the world preaching, and teaching, and baptising, and they should continue their work, which was now about to be interrupted by His death and their dispersion, until the coming of the Son of man. The resumption of their ministry would be after the translation of the pre-millennial saints, and the character of their preaching would be distinct from the gospel which now goes forth, which is especially the gospel of the grace of God to the rejectors of His Son, yet it would be the everlasting gospel inasmuch as any proclamation of the glad tidings must be an announcement of His grace. The day of God's judgment had arrived and all were called upon to fear and worship Him, but inasmuch as only those who are born again can offer worship acceptable to God, it follows that any who respond to the proclamation have been the objects of God's transforming power. I know there are those who demand an exact line of demarkation between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, but I know not where the answer can be found. "Stretch forth thine hand," the Lord said to the man with the withered member. "He stretched,

it forth ; and it was restored whole, like as the other." Who can separate the act of faith from the power of God.

The announcement of the fall of Babylon comes in here, not the full account of the catastrophe which comes later, but in contrast with the everlasting gospel. Rome may claim to be the eternal city, and romanism to have its foundation upon an immovable rock, with power to crush all insubjection ; but it is only God's glad tidings that is everlasting, and the instigator of illicit intercourse with a guilty world will in due time receive her richly merited doom.

No doubt there are those who receive the trade mark of the beast whose consciences tell them they ought not to do so, but what can they do? whither can they turn? If they are of the company that rejected Christ as a Saviour, it is useless to turn to Him in their extremity, their day of offered grace has run out. If they are of those to whom the everlasting gospel is sent forth, and who see no way out of the difficulty in which the edict has placed them, here is for them a most solemn word of warning direct from heaven. If any worship the beast or receive his mark, the undiluted wrath of God falls upon them. It is not merely a question of buying and selling in this proclamation, as in the other, nor of the loss of the

natural life. The consequences of subjection to the devil's representative are most fearful. We read of these awful judgments, and we speak of them, but how little the human mind is able to grasp the meaning of what is put before us in these few and intensely solemn words. An unceasing, unending torment. If it were intermittent there would be a respite, but there is none. The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever; and the unhappy victims of their own madness, who have rejected God their Creator, and accepted the devil as their lord, have no rest, and the doors of their prison open never more. I do not believe in fire and brimstone, says one; it is but a figure. A figure! of what is it a figure? I do not believe says another that God will ever put a child of His into a lake of fire and brimstone. Nor do I, but the children of the devil who go to meet God in that character will have no claims upon Him for mercy and will receive none. "In this the children of God are manifest," says the apostle, "and the children of the devil."

The test applied at this time will be of the severest character, but the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, will be very precious.

We have seen, when considering a previous chapter, that there are two companies of martyred

saints during this period ; those who were slain for the word of God and for their testimony, and those here who are killed for not receiving the mark of the beast. The first company is quieted by the assurance that their number is as yet incomplete ; but the word to the second company will be a source of encouragement and sustainment even if called upon to lay down their lives. The millennial period will be one of complete earthly happiness ; the saints of a previous period will also have learned the fulness of joy and the pleasures forevermore connected with His personal presence, but what of the intermediate martyrs ? Ah, we may well write them down blessed, for if they have missed the earthly possessions it is but to receive a far more excellent portion with the heavenly saints, and be accounted as part of the first resurrection. It is of interest to note how the exercises through which these tribulation saints are passed deepens the work in their souls, and increases their spiritual intelligence. The first were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held ; then the dragon made war with those who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ ; while the third class spoken of keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Again we are brought in these unfoldings to the

scenes of judgment, in the harvest and the vintage which precede the end, and while both are expressive of judgment, there is a marked difference ; for when it is the reaping of the harvest, the Son of man with a golden crown upon His head and a sharp sickle in His hand reaps the earth, for the harvest is dried, or as the ordinary phrase expresses it, dead ripe, while in the vintage it is not the same sharp quick work, but a more impressive and methodical procedure in which angelic agencies are used, and the clusters cut down and then cast into the wine press before the final treading out takes place. Let us consider these deeply solemn scenes somewhat more fully as they are of immense moment.

The harvest and the vintage are evidently intended to convey different thoughts, but there is this in common, they both imply cultivation, and while the harvest may in a general way include the vintage, the vintage is not a word we would use in speaking of the harvest ; here however we have both, and as the vintage is specially indicated, the harvest must convey another thought.

A time is therefore coming when God will deal in judgment with that which has professed to be His, in a way that will be marked out and distinct from His general dealings in judgment with the world. It is

evidently christendom and judaism which are referred to in the harvest and the vintage. Christ had been presented to the world as an object of faith, and the profession of His name was widely extended for some time after the cross, but the devil soon got control of a movement which threatened his kingdom, by using a corrupt church, which professed to be the pillar and ground of truth but was not, to bring in a corruption of the truth more destructive than a denial of it. As the centuries passed and men grew tired or became disgusted with the forms of deception practiced, others were at hand, so each period has had its special soporifics, and vast numbers have allowed themselves to be rocked to sleep in the devil's cradle. At the present time there is a religious sentimentality abroad which the great enemy of souls knows so well how to direct into channels where the residuum will be mud, and the froth will soon be all evaporated, there will be nothing besides. Religious novels filled with sickly sentimentalism; novels in which the apostles and indeed sometimes the Lord Himself are characters; imaginary dreams in which the Lord has been present as a visitor; books in which the Lord is lauded and the imitation of Him pressed apart from His eternal Sonship and apart also from the work of atonement, are all sad evidences of the descent of man whom Satan leads captive at his

will. Christ ceases, by the modern teaching, to be an object of faith set before a sinner, and becomes an object of emulation for salvation. The elevation of the masses is the watchword of the day, and professed servants, who if they were really such would be leading souls to Christ as the only way of approach to God, are largely occupied in improving the morals and mending the ways of those who are destitute of divine life, and whether moral or immoral are hastening downwards to perdition.

When king Immanuel in the holy war had brought his batteries against eye gate and ear gate in the attack upon the citadel of Mansoul, there were those who rode reformades outside the camp. They not only did nothing towards making the attack effective, but they distracted the attention and hindered the progress of those who were engaged in the work. What would be said of the physician who only thought of removing the pustules from the body of a varioloid patient instead of attacking the producing cause. There is no saving value in moral reformation, the tree is corrupt, the fruit cannot be good ; new birth, a new nature are indispensable. Alas ! that so many who assume to preach the gospel of God should be preaching the pelagian heresy which denies the fall, the utter ruin of the race, and consequently the value

of the atonement, and puts before perishing souls a wretched nostrum compounded of ingredients which minister to the pride and self-satisfaction of the sinner, instead of casting him down as helpless and hopeless before a willing and waiting Saviour.

All these influences are tending to produce that state of things which while assuming to be in relationship with God is merely a lifeless carcass, and where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Thus the harvest is becoming ripe for the sickle and the process of ingathering will be considered when the fall of Babylon is before us in later chapters.

But there is not only the harvest, there is the vintage ; it is the vine of the earth that is to be gathered, and the one who gathers has power over fire, God's consuming judgment. Israel had been planted a noble vine, a wholly right seed, but she had turned herself into a degenerate plant of a strange vine. God had taken up a family, a people, and endowed them with His richest gifts. To them He had committed the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service, and the promises. They were the adoption. He had given them prophets, and priests, and teachers. What could have been done more than He did for them, and how unavailing. In the wilderness they took up the tabernacle of Moloch,

and the star of the god Remphan, figures which they made to worship. In the land they had as many forms of idolatry as there were cities in Israel, then they were carried away captive to Babylon. If God in grace brought back a portion of Judah to a house cleansed from idolatry, swept and garnished, in order that the tribal rod should not depart from him, nor a law-giver from between his feet until Shiloh came, it but manifested more clearly the state of the nation in their rejection of the One who came in grace and truth, thus postponing the gathering of the people to Him, and consequently leading to the breaking of His staff beauty. Judah, Isaiah tells us, returns to the land in unbelief, while God pleads with the tribes of Ephraim in the wilderness. All had been abiding many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. But the time comes when this people give up all pretence of relationship with Jehovah, and hasten after another god. Was it not He that cut Rahab and wounded the dragon? Did He not bring out His people from Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm? Did He not feed them with angel's food, the food of the mighty, by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Did He not stay the waters of Jordan and

make them rise up upon an heap very far from the city of Adam that is beside Zaretan? Did He not drive out from before them nations greater and mightier than they, to bring them in and give them their land for an inheritance? And this is the God whom they contemn; from whom they turn to worship a mere man! But the God with whom they have to do is a holy and a righteous God. He may wait in patient grace for centuries for some indication of a response to His long-suffering mercy, but at the last the obduracy and rebellion of those upon whom His grace has been lavished must call forth a righteous judgment, all the more severe because of despised favors. Angelic powers are used to shape events, and then the awful rod of divine wrath descends, and blood flows even to the horse bridles.

Thus we have seen in our chapter the company of earthly saints whose association with the Lamb is on mount Zion, and through whom He will exercise His benign rule over the spared nations of the world. Here, as elsewhere, it is evident that there is no blessing for the earth apart from the work of the cross. The redeemed are with the Lamb; they follow the Lamb; they are the first fruits unto God and the Lamb. Then there is the everlasting gospel; then the fall of Babylon; then the warning to the beast-worshippers;

the blessedness of the martyred ones ; and lastly the execution of the judgment of the Son of man, upon that which had professed the name of Jehovah or of Christ ; the jew within the land, the professing church without.

The reader will no doubt have understood that here, and in other places in this remarkable book, events are not recorded in consecutive order, but for a moral connection which will be apparent when the context is considered.



CHAPTER XV.

Another sign is seen in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues which filled up the wrath of God ; but besides, there is a sea of glass mingled with fire and a triumphant company standing thereon. This part of the book as before remarked is a re-consideration of scenes and circumstances, in some instances merely glanced at as the history of events was being recorded in consecutive order. After that was completed we saw in the twelfth chapter a view of things from the birth of Christ to the end of the tribulation as connected with one subject. In the thirteenth chapter was a remarkable exhibit of the two important personages who are the chief actors in the closing scenes, and if that chapter gives us the devil's side of things, the fourteenth gives us God's side, and if God interposes for the rescue of His people, He does it in such manner that the rescued may be praised for qualities with which He Himself has endowed them ; but this is just what the God of all grace is ever doing, blessed be His holy name !

The white robed company of chapter seven stand before the throne; the governmental company of chapter fourteen stand with the Lamb on mount Zion; but in the fifteenth another company is seen, and what they have passed through, the great tribulation anticipatively considered, as well as in what their victories consist. They are acknowledged to be blameless, but if the sea is no longer for purification, the fires of the tribulation through which they have been passing have done their effectual work, and the victory they have achieved is a moral victory. These have suffered martyrdom for not worshipping the beast, others have been brought unscathed through the persecution to enter into millennial blessing. These heavenly saints sing the song of Moses, the song of redemption, then speak of the King of nations. The one who sits upon the throne is by them addressed as Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai, so that if their testimony on earth had been but a negative testimony, they simply did not worship the beast, their apprehension of heavenly things is correspondingly feeble. So, many who are now, although children of God, but little in evidence for the glory of Christ, will in the coming day have less conception of the glories of heaven than others who have been more faithful here.

The prophet then sees the temple of the taber-

nacle of testimony opened in heaven, and seven angels issuing therefrom. They have the seven plagues, they are clothed in pure and white linen, and have their breasts girded with golden girdles.

Before speaking further of these, I shall now have to advance an exegesis of the vial judgments which some will perhaps not be ready to accept, but which I hope to be able to sustain by proofs which the word of God gives me.

It has been said, and more than once repeated, that the prophecy of this book ends with the eighteenth verse of the eleventh chapter, but in this statement I am not singular for most futurists accept this as the proper division of the book, yet strange to say, all, so far as I know, look upon the outpouring of the vials as a further and distinct series of judgments. Now both these views cannot be correct because of their confliction. If the former is abandoned then the Lord God Almighty has not taken His great power to reign; the judgment of the dead has not taken place; nor have the servants been rewarded. If the latter is the true interpretation, then it is evident that there is no break in the continuity of the visions.

The remarkable similarity in the effects produced by the trumpet sounds and the vials outpoured, not in some, but in all, would be apparent even in cursory

reading, but the differences are also remarkable because while on the one hand there is internal evidence of radical agreement, there are the variations which indicate a more extended or different sphere of action in the latter than in the former. That is to say, when the history of the final judgments upon the roman earth is recorded, it is seen that the producing cause is a call which should command attention, inasmuch as it is addressed to that part of the world which is professedly in relation with heaven, but as to distant lands and heathen countries where Christ is unknown, a silent operation upon the atmosphere sets in motion the operating causes in a more extended sphere.

The trumpet judgments as we have seen are made up of two distinct series, the first of four and the last of three, and all of the first four are circumscribed in their effects, or rather while their action is of unlimited range, the Spirit of God is only occupied in that connection with the effect upon the roman earth, or as expressed, the third part. The fifth trumpet which opens the pit of the abyss and releases the demons is necessarily without restriction, as the effects are at once upon the air and not upon the earth, but the amplification of it when taken in connection with the other trumpets show us more particularly that part of the

earth upon which the trumpet judgments act. The second woe trumpet is of more limited application than the corresponding vial, and the last in each is the close, which must be practically the same in either case.

But to return to our chapter. The wrath of God is coming upon the world to the uttermost, but in perfect righteousness. Not only are the executors of it clothed in white linen, but they are also girded with golden girdles. Outwardly all may be conscious of the holiness of divine actings, but besides, the actors are themselves righteously sustained in holy love for the One whose glory they are about to maintain in righteous judgments; and if the immediate agents are but angelic, the direction to them and the over guidance is cherubic. But there is more, there is the manifest presence of God Himself, and further, the angels issue from that very presence with their awful commission. When in a previous chapter we saw the temple opened in heaven, the ark of the covenant was there, pledge of God's faithful promises to Israel, for then the Spirit of God was directing the prophet's gaze to that part of the world where the judgments had a trumpet character and where the godly Jewish remnant was surrounded by the awful scenes which were transpiring, and the sight of the ark of the covenant would sustain their hearts.

CHAPTER XVI.

But now a voice of authority sends forth these mighty powers, their actings begin at once, and the results are tremendous. The first vial was poured out on the earth, and the effect was universal, not as with the first trumpet affecting a third part merely, but on all everywhere who did homage to the beast and bore his mark. Both however have reference to the plagues of Egypt, which, real as they were, are yet among the "all those things" which "happened to them for types and are written for our admonition." It will be seen that the trumpet woe corresponds to the seventh egyptian plague in so far as the sphere of its action goes, and with the terrible addition of blood, but when we come to the same period in the vial aspect we have the fulfilment of the closing part of the figure of the plague: "Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail." The line of demarkation has now been drawn; the beast-worshippers have been marked; the servants of God have been sealed in their foreheads, and the begin-

ning of the final judgments which inflicts an evil and grievous sore, inflicts it upon the marked beast-worshippers only. There was no such thing under the first trumpet simply because the Spirit of God did not present either of the beasts until after the main record had been completed, and further, because it was in keeping with the vial and not with the trumpet judgments. Chronologically the trumpet and vial judgments appear to begin to run their course immediately after the great events which transpire in the middle of the week and are the consequence of them, because of the complete and irrevocable identification of the earth-dwellers with the blasphemer of God by receiving his mark. Up to this time the silent breaking of the seals in providential judgments had made no discrimination between persons, but when sides are finally taken, and evilly disposed subjects, who have been warned of the consequences, put on the uniform of the revolting leader, the rightful sovereign can have nothing but punishment for the rebels when the rebellion has been suppressed.

The silence in heaven was ominous; the casting to the earth of the burning censer, the Lord's reply to the infamous trio now so busily occupied in marshalling for a final and awful conflict their rebellious hosts, was fearfully impressive; and the effect of the action

considering the Divine Actor, the instrument, the connection, and the resulting effects, was such, that only those blinded of Satan could be indifferent to, or unconscious of, the impending great tribulation.

We have seen that the first trumpet and the first vial are effective in the same sphere, that is to say the earth, although not conterminate ; furthermore, is it not evident that the result of the angelic action in each case is during the same period, because the trumpets are not blown until the saints of God are sealed, but the sealing is the Lord's response to the marking of the beast, and this takes place at that momentous epoch so often spoken of, the middle of the week, when the beast has the power given him to make war on the saints. The first vial produces a noisome and grievous sore upon those who had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image, so that from either aspect we see the agreement, and the conclusion is inevitable, that the vial comprehends the trumpet.

The power given to the beast to make war on the saints and to overcome them after the period of his course has been assigned, produces the second crop of martyrs ; the persecution under the professing church had produced the first, both of whom as hereinbefore shown have part in the first resurrection.

It is not difficult to understand that the effort made by a man of inflexible determination, having supreme and irresistible power, to weld communities into a common religion would not be stayed by any merciful considerations, but must, if to be at all successful, crush unmercifully every opponent ; yet the thought of the professing church of God becoming again a bitter persecutor, many will have a difficulty in accepting. Have not the days of the inquisition passed away forever ? Could anyone suppose that the massacre of St. Bartholomew could be repeated ? Alas for the credulity that believes a hell-inspired institution may reverse its nature. Can the ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ?

The second angel empties his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of one dead, and every living soul died—those in the sea. If the first was emptied on the land where a stable and ordered state of things seemed to exist, the second was on another sphere, a troubled and agitated one, and every living soul therein died. I apprehend that death here is not physical death but a severance of all professed relationship with God. In the corresponding trumpet judgment the effect upon the roman earth only was recorded, but there a third part of the ships also was destroyed—intercommunication restricted—but also,

we are there given the producing cause, the casting of a burning mountain into the sea. There had been in a way an acknowledgment of God, but the casting down of that which had so greatly exalted itself, which became a burnt mountain, that apparently fixed and immovable institution known as Babylon, produced the baneful effects here recorded. Doubtless the profession had no value in the sight of God, yet while it was not openly and avowedly hostile, there was the semblance of life, which ceased when the beast was accepted and worshipped as God.

“The third poured out his vial on the rivers and fountains of waters ; and they became blood.” In the succeeding chapter, waters are explained as meaning peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. Rivers are restrained and have their course directed by their banks, unlike the sea, which, restless and unrestrained casts up mire and dirt. Thus the pouring out of the vials affects successively the different communities into which the inhabitants of the earth have been formed, whether near or remote ; whether fixed and established, or in unrest, or subject to guiding and controlling principles ; all these rebels have to be broken upon the wheel of a righteous God’s relentless judgments.

It was under the third trumpet that the star

Wormwood fell upon the third part of the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became wormwood so that many died from the bitterness of the waters. If the fall of this dignitary produced a moral death among those peoples who were under the control of the roman power, those beyond its influence found something more than bitterness, they found blood. There was apparently with these less readiness to accept the new cult, but God was over it ; they had shed the blood of saints and prophets, and now the self-existent, the Holy One, righteously ordered that they should have blood to drink. The angel of the waters speaks, and the altar replies ! what an astonishing colloquy !

When the fifth seal was opened we were shown a martyred company in connection with the altar, an intimation that God's silence as to what was transpiring was not indifference ; subsequently the burning censer charged with fire from off the altar, when cast down to the earth gave warning of God's wrath now ready to break forth upon His adversaries ; and finally, how fitting that the place where God's judgment of sin was expressed in the consuming fire upon the sacrifice ; a sacrifice which in the anti-type was of such value that all who by faith were identified with it were safe from the avenging angel's sword ; how

fitting I say, that this altar whose sacrifice was despised and rejected should testify against the despisers and rejecters. "I tell you," said the blessed Lord on one occasion, "that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

The fourth trumpet and the fourth vial have the same sphere of action in part, yet the former exceeds in number of objects acted upon, while the latter shows a greater intensity of effect in the results. This may at first thought seem to be a departure from the order we have seen in the previous comparisons, but it is not so. The sun, that great orb of light and heat, is said to rule the day, it is the supreme luminary in this lower world, and thus used figuratively in scripture for the highest governing power. On the sounding of the trumpet, not only was it obscured, but the lesser lights were also, so that the rulers in the roman earth were in a moral darkness that prevented them from seeing clearly the effect of the very acts in which they were engaged, but when on the other hand we see the effect of the vial, it is not upon the rulers that we see it, but upon the ruled.

Whatever the roman emperor may do at this juncture to produce such a result as that people should be scorched with a great heat and curse God, which many are so ready even now to do, can only be conjectured,

Wormwood fell upon the third part of the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became wormwood so that many died from the bitterness of the waters. In the fall of this dignitary produced a moral death among those peoples who were under the control of the roman power, those beyond its influence for something more than bitterness, they found blood. There was apparently with these less readiness to accept the new cult, but God was over it; they shed the blood of saints and prophets, and not self-existent, the Holy One, righteously ordered they should have blood to drink. The angel of the waters speaks, and the altar replies! what an interesting colloquy!

When the fifth seal was opened we were reminded of a martyred company in connection with the intimation that God's silence as to what was going on was not indifference; subsequently the altar of incense charged with fire from off the altar of gold down to the earth gave warning of God's wrath ready to break forth upon His adversaries. How fitting that the place where God's wrath was expressed in the consumption of the sacrifice; a sacrifice which in the ancient times had value that all who by faith were saved from the avenging sword of but

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but that the power of God is displayed in it is evident, for He is the one who has authority over these plagues and is able to direct the very forces opposed to Him into the execution of His righteous judgments upon opposers.

How insensate that a mere creature should think to prevail against its Creator ! Frailty that succumbs under more than the most ordinary pressure : an existence which, even the most prolonged, is but as a moment compared with eternity : a body, fitted indeed with elaborate and complicated machinery which is only kept in operation by an indwelling and pervading principle called life, and when this animating power is withdrawn by the One who implanted it no other power could set in motion for an instant a single one of the functions before exercised by the now defunct body ; and yet while all this is so self-evident as to be axiomatic, we see everywhere, even now, a hostility against God which will presently take form in open and avowed rebellion. And how strange it all is. On every side we see the works of a beneficent Creator : elements that singly or in combination are perfectly adapted to the purposes for which they were made : organisms innumerable that exist and develop under a condition of things that only infinite wisdom could have ordered, and often the elimination of but

one factor in the animating and propelling forces would be destruction: a vast number of influences abroad that undirected or misdirected would throw everything into confusion, and yet all this creation, with its involved, its intricate, its often incomprehensible laws of government goes on age after age until its purposes of creation have been completed and then it will be folded up as a vesture and laid aside.

When we were considering the trumpet judgments, it was seen that the last three, or woe trumpets, had not the limited range that the previous ones had, it was not the third part, we can therefore turn back to these for fuller light on the last vials and find an exposition which the latter does not give.

The fifth bowl poured upon the throne of the beast does not merely produce obscurity, the kingdom is full of darkness, they gnawed their tongues for distress, blasphemed the God of heaven, and repented not. What an awful terseness there is in these few words. It is an evident advance upon the previous judgment, great as that one was, and the effect was not merely blasphemy against the "name of God," but against the "God of heaven."

The darkness and the distress are the result of the irruption of demons from the abyss, heretofore kept in durance, but now for a season permitted to exercise their infernal office of inflicting torment.

The pouring out of the sixth vial upon the great river Euphrates dries up the river that the way of the kings from the sun-rising may be prepared. This is a remarkable sentence, and the question at once arises whether it is to be taken literally or figuratively. The corresponding trumpet set in motion the vast armies which we find in this vial are being gathered together to the war of that great day of God Almighty ; but was it for these, the enemies of God, that the great river was made to yield a passage? The waters in the past have overwhelmed such. Was it then, that prophetic boundaries were now being obliterated? The effects of the first vial were world-wide.

The efforts to find the ten tribes, which were carried away captive by Sennacherib and his predecessors, in the present nations of Europe, and the fancy of an Anglo-Israel, is all the merest dream of diseased minds. The deported tribes were planted in Halah, Habor, Hara, and by the river Gozan, and they never returned. Their jewish brethren who were brought into captivity more than a hundred years later, did in part return after their seventy years of bondage had expired, but the ten tribes still await the call of God when He will bring them into the wilderness, and plead with them there, and purge out the rebels. This ancient people of God were taken away into the central parts of Asia

more than twenty six hundred years ago ; and, as the word of God tells us, they are to be brought back again ; where are they now ? Surely not in some subterranean hiding place, and if not, they must be sought for in existing and known races of people.

It will no doubt be a great surprise to find in well known asiatic races, the lost tribes of Israel, but the remarkable israelitish cast of features borne by inhabitants of countries contiguous to those parts where this people were planted so many centuries ago is an indication that when the call of God is heard there are those who will respond other than the people of Gog or of the fourth monarchy.

A few years ago a traveller in the east questioned a company of horsemen whom he met as to their race and origin. " We are," said the leader, " children of Jonadab the son of Rechab, of whom Jehovah of hosts the God of Israel said : ' Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever.' " And more recently a company of people have appeared in Judea who claim to be of the tribe of Dan.

When God brought His people out of Egypt He made a passage for them through the Red sea, when He brought them into the land, the deep and rapidly flowing waters of Jordan were suddenly stayed by divine power until they rose up upon an heap, and

what more consistent with these marvellous actings of old than that the river which excludes them from their millennial possessions should, by the same power, be commanded to cease its flow that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. It must be borne in mind that it is the Euphrates and not the Jordan which, in the coming age, is the eastern boundary of the enlarged area the Lord will reserve for His people.

The Spirit of God turns now from observing the kings of the east and gives the prophet to see three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet ; spirits of demons, doing signs before the kings of the habitable world to gather them together to that great battle on the hill of Megiddo. In the corresponding trumpet judgment, three plagues, which were limited in their effects, went out of the mouths of the horses and were fatal in the sphere of their action. These three plagues were said to be fire and smoke and brimstone. Thus we see that these, by which men were killed, were three unclean spirits, and while they were allowed to do deeds that seemed, and perhaps were, superhuman, the moral effect left behind them, was fire and smoke and brimstone. The first and the last taken together express the sulphurous emission from the opened pit, and that

which comes in between, the obscuring effect of the others. It was manifestly hellish to any whose moral perceptions were not darkened, but the obscuring effect of the smoke prevented the kings of the habitable world from discovering that the signs wrought were demoniacal, and the result was that they joined the coalition. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against Jehovah and against His anointed." But the Lord holds them in derision. No shaft forged against Him can prosper.

The plain of Esdraelon becomes again the scene of great events. It has been historical ground since the dawn of history. The kings of Canaan fought there against Barak and the hosts of Jehovah, but the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

Whether He gathered them, or they gathered them, matters not; God is over all whatever instrumentalities He may please to use. "And this shall be the plague wherewith Jehovah will smite all the peoples that have fought against Jerusalem; their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from Jehovah shall be among them; and they shall lay hold everyone on the hand of his neighbor,

and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbor.”

But the end is approaching. The Lord is about to come again, and to those who are not expecting Him it will be as a thief. It will not be so to those who are watching, to such He can never come at an unlooked for moment, yet there may have been a growing conformity to things around, imperceptible but advancing, that needs the word of caution and encouragement. Let those look to their deportment, if it is such that their garment is taken away there will be nakedness and consequent shame.

At last the seventh bowl is emptied and in the air, and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne saying, “It is done.” Unless there can be two culminating periods, two distinct epochs at which a crisis in these great events is reached, this must be the same point of time when the great voices were heard in heaven saying: “The world kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is come”; the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

When we hear of the great voice from the throne of God saying, “It is done,” our thoughts go back insensibly to the time of another loud cry from the same lips, nineteen centuries before, saying, “It is finished.” How great the contrast! Then, God had

come down to man in the person of His Son for the accomplishment of a work of grace of such magnitude, that as we survey it, the mind is well nigh overwhelmed with a sense of its grandeur ; of such wisdom, so profound, so infinite ; of such love, so far beyond human comprehension, that the soul which has been absorbed by it, rests with ineffable delight in that which the mind cannot fathom, but which is made good to faith.

Then there was no power put forth in judgment ; no imputation of trespasses. That was the day for binding up the broken-hearted ; the day of the proclamation of the acceptable year of Jehovah. The blessed Son of God, full of grace and truth, came among His fallen creatures bearing a yoke ; what a sight ! If on the one hand His meekness and lowliness excited the scorn and contempt of the proud, on the other it was an irresistible attraction to the poor and afflicted. But that life of unselfishness and unswerving devotion to God terminated at a cross of shame. The only perfect Man this world had ever seen was crucified between two thieves. The incarnate Creator of all things allowed His wicked creatures to do their will upon Him, and no power was put forth for their deserved destruction. "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," was the response to the hatred His love had evoked.

True, the Son of God has been crucified, but we would have been no parties to it had we been there ; we surely can have no responsibility for an act committed so many centuries before we were born, and which we repudiate. "Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites ! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, 'If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers."

Nineteen centuries have run their course and for all these years the sun has looked down upon a blood-stained scene ; upon an unrepentant race. What value is repudiation of an act if there is identification with the actors. Even the common law of the land fixes guilt upon the accessory after a fact, and if I am identified with the wicked murderers of the Lord Jesus I am guilty of His blood. The word now as of old is : "Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

On the completion of the work of expiation Jesus said : "It is finished." This voice proceeded from the cross. When the moment of the termination of His long-suffering patience and grace had arrived

“there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.”

The sounding of the seventh trumpet had given us to see the effect of it upon the translated church, which had, while on earth, been in the midst of the iniquity which the very perpetrators had charged God with unrighteousness in allowing. How was it that God permitted His arch-enemy to be abroad? How was it that God allowed His creatures to curse Him to His face, after having crucified His Son? How was it that wicked men and seducers should wax worse and worse deceiving and being deceived? A righteous and a holy God had endured with much long suffering a state of things abhorrent to Him. It was indeed a mystery : but the reason was now to be disclosed.

The pouring out of the seventh vial was upon the air ; the effect was universal ; voices in heaven ; thunders and lightnings in the air ; an earthquake of unprecedented violence upon the earth, were sufficient to appal the stoutest heart, but there was more, “the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell ; and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. And every island fled, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven.”

It will be remembered that it was at the beginning of the sounding of the seventh trumpet that the mystery of God was finished, and that when it had sounded, voices in heaven proclaimed that the world kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ had come, and for the third time the elders leave their thrones to fall down on their faces and worship. In the fourth chapter the glory of the Creator had incited to this, in the fifth chapter it was redemptorial glory, while here it is the glory of the Son of man, the One under whom all things are now subjected. The great and dreadful day of Jehovah of which Malachi had prophesied, in the closing words of old testament inspiration, now find their fulfilment ; the Lord Jesus descends to the earth with a vast company of heavenly beings, and a final and absolute cleansing out of His kingdom is made of all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, in order to the casting of them into a furnace of fire where is wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Hitherto fearful scenes had been witnessed ; alarming sounds had been heard ; men's hearts had failed them for fear ; vast numbers had lost their lives ; yet amid it all there remained the mass of the earth-dwellers to rejoice over the slain witnesses, and to take unbounded satisfaction in the thought that their troubles were now past, since the ones who troubled

them were dead. Their rejoicing is of brief duration ; “ the Judge standeth before the door.” When the Saviour was upon the cross a funeral pall was cast upon the face of nature, hiding the holy Victim in His dying agony from the heartless gaze of callous men, those who responded to the look for pity and for comforters by shooting out the lip and laughing Him to scorn ; moreover, when the Lord dismissed His Spirit, the earth did quake, the rocks were rent and graves were opened. When He comes again to the earth even inanimate nature will respond to His presence ; a mountain will be split to its base, and the riven parts open out to form a great valley ; the mountainous region in which His city, the city of the great King is situated, will change its character, be lifted up, and become a plateau ; the Dead sea will be filled up and sweetened ; the delta of the Nile will be dried up, and the tongue of the Egyptian sea, evidently the Suez canal will be destroyed ; but beyond this, His enemies, who had declared they would not have Him to reign over them, are slain before Him ; it is the day of God’s vengeance ; of His strange work, and He will cut it short in righteousness.

The division of the great city into three parts ; the fall of the cities of the nations ; and God’s wrath upon Babylon, is the briefest possible epitome of very great

events, comprising in the first and third parts the judgment upon Rome in its civil and ecclesiastical aspects, and in the second her related communities. As however we shall presently consider these judgments in detail, it will be unnecessary to speak of the character or extent of them here. The islands flee, the mountains disappear. Isolation or stability are of no avail as God's besom of destruction sweeps away every refuge of lies.

CHAPTER XVII.

We now reach a part of our book where we find an amplification not seen elsewhere ; events which we would have thought the most important of any have been dismissed with a paragraph or a sentence, and doubtless what will have transpired beyond the bounds of those countries with which the Spirit of God has been occupied, because of their proximity to God's land and God's people, will be of a magnitude and importance from the human standpoint, as great, if not greater, than those occurring in the prophetic earth ; yet they are unnoticed, while the downfall of Babylon, in her double aspect, is presented in much detail in the next two succeeding chapters.

If we are to learn God's ways, if we are to be taught in His school, it must be apart from this world's glory, and this world's associations. The very first thing that Cain's offspring did was to build a city, but when God took up the cause of His people for their redemption He led them out of all relationship with that which for us typifies the world, and into a

wilderness where there were no resources apart from Himself, that their judgment might be formed, and their course directed by principles learned under His teaching and guidance.

The prophet is in spirit in the wilderness, and he had been told that he was to see there an infamous woman, sitting upon many waters ; that is, an established relationship with the many nations, a relationship of the most defiling character and of the widest extent, embracing both rulers and ruled. Her corruptions would in any case have been destructive of every moral principle in those who were contaminated by them, but when she is seen to be dominating the civil power, and sustained by it, her degrading filthiness which ministers to the basest sentiments of the human heart, acquires the overwhelming influence of established and irresistible authority.

When we speak of the destruction of Babylon we shall have to distinguish between the civil or roman power, and the ecclesiastical or religious aspect, both of which are spoken of in these chapters, both are visited with the awful judgments of God, but at different times and in different manner. We have had previous intimations of these judgments. In the fourteenth chapter of our book is the first reference to Babylon, and there it is evidently the religious profession.

When it will occur to the roman emperor to institute a common religion, and when he proceeds to put his designs into execution by breaking his covenant with the jews, the first step must be the suppression of all other religions, foremost among which will be the professing christian church. Here was that which assumed to be the witness for Christ upon earth, to be the bride of the Lamb, but the Spirit of God tears away the mask from the face of this infamous woman and discloses a brazen and shameless prostitute. She had assumed much ; she had claimed to be the custodian of God's judgments and God's favours ; she had enslaved her votaries in the bonds of superstition, and then debased them to the depths of a spiritual degradation, both abominable and filthy. Some she anathematized ; some she committed to the unquenchable fires of hell, and some she admitted into the paradise of God. Ornamented with gold and precious stones and pearls, she was well prepared to practice the deceptions which entrapped any who were unable to see her from God's point of vision, the wilderness.

The church of Rome holds, in a way, every truth contained in the word of God. There is no denial of the divinity of Christ, nor of His eternal Sonship. The work of the cross, its value, its completeness, and its abiding efficacy, are fully admitted. The natural

depravity of the human heart is taught, and a remedy provided. She is adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, and has in her hand a golden cup. How attractive all this is, for are not these the very symbols of the precious things which God bestows? There is no word that these were counterfeits; there is no, "as it were;" but now, look for a moment into that golden cup, and what is seen? It is full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. How awful that the precious things of God should be made to do service for the ornamentation of an avowed courtesan! Is it any wonder that the sorest judgments of God are to fall upon that which takes up the holy name of Christ and His unsearchable riches for the basest and most soul-defiling purposes?

The divinity of Christ is stoutly maintained. He is the Son of God, He is God, could you ask more? but the woman through whom He received His humanity is exalted above Him, and prayer intercession and thanksgiving are made to her as queen of heaven, instead of to the One to whom every knee must bow, and every tongue confess, that He is Lord. Jesus is God, but Mary is the mother of God; shocking blasphemy.

So also as to the work of the cross; who more insistent upon its value. Pictures of an exposed and bleeding heart are to be seen everywhere. Images and

pictures of an expiring Saviour are carried or uplifted as objects of adoration, but if the worship is not always to the symbols, if it should pass these, it is intercepted, and directed to the one who herself must needs have been cleansed by that precious blood, a poor sinner saved by grace.

“I believe in the forgiveness of sins,” is a credo which is taught to the youngest and repeated by the oldest; but how is this forgiveness obtained? Do you believe that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures? Certainly I do. Do you believe that the blood of Jesus Christ God’s Son cleanseth from all sin? Certainly I do. How then is the death of Christ and the value of His precious blood to be made available for the sinner? By confession of sins, and by absolution for them. To whom is confession to be made, and by whom is absolution granted? The priest. And is there no access to God but by the priesthood? None whatever. Scripture says, hear the church, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven were committed to St. Peter and his successors, therefore it is written: “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

Thus the blessed stream of grace which flows from the heart of God down to the graceless children of men,

is turned out of its fructifying channel, and, led across the barren and lifeless sands of unregenerate hearts, is dissipated and completely lost in the Sahara of roman catholicism.

Her name is written upon her forehead ; how is it that it is not read? Ah, it was only the man with whom the secret of God was, who could interpret the meaning of the writing upon the plaistered wall of the palace at Babylon, and now again it is only the one who has the mind of the Lord who can understand the true character of that soul-destroying institution by which we are surrounded.

Her effrontery is amazing. Assuming to be the bride of Christ she claims for herself not only a heavenly origin, but a holy existence. There is no reason in what she is saying ; she speaks like a drunken woman, as indeed she is one. She is drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the martyrs of Jesus. Her's was a sinful conception, the result of a wicked liaison, her's has been an iniquitous existence, and her end will be destruction. Well may the apostle wonder with a great wonderment at such a sight. He had seen the beginning of the church upon earth ; the power and presence of the Holy Ghost ; the manifestation of the gifts from the ascended and glorified Head ; a chaste virgin with clothing of wrought gold and raiment of

needlework, and now he sees a drunken prostitute, who for a thousand years and more persecuted to the death the saints of God, and not only so, the ingenuity of man was exhausted in the invention of instruments of torture in order to intensify the sufferings of faithful martyrs of Jesus, members of the body of Christ.

Well, here is an exposition of the mystery ; the seven headed and ten horned beast, which was and is not and shall be present, ascends out of the bottomless pit and goes into perdition. This is the beast which carries the woman ; and not only are there seven heads, there are also seven mountains upon which she sits, and the seven heads are seven mountains, that is, the identification between the locality and the operating power is so complete that confirmative proof is unnecessary. The seven heads are seven successive forms of government, five had passed away, one was existing at the time of the vision, one, of brief duration, was to follow, and finally the eighth form, satanic in origin and in operation, is consigned, in the person of its head and representative to that region from which its power had been derived, and to the company of that wicked being who, unseen, had been the energy, and the director of, this last great world kingdom. The reign of the confederated kings of this federal pact is a brief one, but their oneness of mind in their hostility to Christ in

the persons of His saints is complete, the *solidarit * unbroken, for the skilful director leads them captive at his will. However it is useless, for He that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they. The great King who comes against them has with Him called and chosen and faithful ones, and He is the overcomer.

We are now told how the destruction of the false church is brought about, and in this as in all the ways of God, what infinite wisdom and infinite power is displayed. God puts it into the hearts of the confederated kings to confer upon the emperor the fullest power in their several kingdoms, for the purpose, it would seem, of exterminating a religious system which had become hateful and intolerable to them.

“ And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” The change of metaphor which we are constantly finding in this book, which has sometimes proven a difficulty, really elucidates the meaning, and like circumstantial evidence in a criminal trial, adds link after link to the chain, until there is no escape from an inevitable conclusion. The woman sits upon many waters ; she sits upon a scarlet colored beast ; she sits upon the seven heads of the beast ; and she sits upon seven mountains. Now the woman is a great city and

reigns over kings. It is an organized system, with rules and regulations and by-laws ; with executive officers, a police force and penal impositions. It is all clearly the same institution; and the next chapter develops her character and her fate with much detail.

In the fourteenth chapter we had the first intimation of the judgment of Babylon. The beast had marked his own, and God responds by sealing His servants in their foreheads. This, it is evident, was at a period when the new religion was established, when the beast cast off the woman by whom he was being ridden and began the relentless persecution we have just been considering, and this was before the sounding of the trumpets, and forty and two months before the final crisis. In the fourteenth chapter which synchronises with the seventh, after the judgment of Babylon is announced, the angel's loud voiced warning is heard, the blessedness of those who die in the Lord is announced, for it is a time of bitter persecution. Earlier in these scenes the professing church had consigned many saints of God to martyrdom, and their souls were seen under the altar; now it is the abomination that maketh desolate, the newly established idolatrous worship which causes the blood of the witnesses of Jesus to flow; but they are blessed; if they miss the earthly blessing they succeed to a far higher

and happier state, to a part in the first resurrection. Then we hear of the harvest and the vintage. Man proceeds to do certain things for the accomplishment of his own purposes, unconscious that he is the executor of God's decrees. It may seem the natural course of events, that the new religion, having been established by the state, the repression of all others should follow ; and from a political point of view it will no doubt seem a wise arrangement that a common policy should govern the counsel of the bund for the accomplishment of an end, which all agree in thinking to be a desideratum. And so, united action is decided upon ; a decree is issued, and its execution is rigorously enforced ; the harlot is made desolate and naked ; they eat her flesh ; consume her substance ; and burn her with fire. This is man's side, but turning back to the fourteenth chapter we see God's side, and there one like unto the Son of man is seen seated on a cloud, and having in His hand a sharp sickle. How He reaps the harvest and the vintage, and what instrumentality the sickle represents is not there explained. It is clearly not the day of the Lord, for then He will not be on the cloud but on the earth. If judgment is being executed, God is providentially over that execution ; and if on the one hand we see the Son of man with a sharp sickle in His hand, on the other we see

that the sharp sickle does its work through a medium which must itself be judged. How wonderful are the ways of God !



CHAPTER XVIII.

One of the peculiarities of the book which we are considering is, that after the announcement of an event, there is the return to a history of the circumstances which led up to it, or the moral state which necessitated the action taken. In the seventeenth chapter we had the judgment of the wicked woman ; in the eighteenth chapter we have not only God's side of things as in the fourteenth, but the reason for the judgment upon her and its relative effect. Very little is said about the downfall of the judaïc system, while the babylonish institution is largely before the mind of the Spirit. God had established the former in order that man's inability to work out a righteousness acceptable to God might be manifested, and when the purpose for which it was set up was accomplished in the coming into the world of Him who was the end of the law for righteousness, man persisted in clinging to that of which the use had been fulfilled, and in rejecting the One who as the antitype of all that had been foreshadowed in the past was God's provision for a lost

and helpless race. The rejection of Him, and the maintenance of what God had closed, was rebellion, and, unsustained by His grace, could only end in apostasy, and then the judgment falls. On the other side, however, there is the corruption of that which is an exhibition here of the manifold wisdom of God. The taking out of the world a people, who through God's transforming grace should be fitted and suitable companions for His Son in celestial glory, is a work so far beyond the highest flight of human imagination, so far beyond the promises to, or the hopes of past ages, that it stands out as unique in the history of God's dealings with His creature man. The base imitation of this wonderful work of God; the satanic effort to make it ineffective by presenting a counterfeit, and the awful energy put forth to destroy that which God had introduced as a special manifestation of His wisdom and power, could only call for a response fitting the character of the collusive opposition, consequently we find an elaboration of detail expressive of the mind of the Spirit regarding this conspiracy to destroy that upon which God had bestowed such a sacrifice and such painstaking.

“After these things I saw another angel come down from heaven having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory.”

It will by this time have become apparent that all thought of moral excellency has been abandoned by the professing church, and that the whole profession, while acknowledging the name of Christ, is completely given up to sensuous gratification. The birds of the air, those agents of the evil one which industriously devoured the seed which had fallen by the way side, find among the branches of this vast tree of profession a safe and pleasant retreat, and it is also the abode of demons and of every unclean spirit. All nations had yielded to illicit intercourse with this vast system, only to find that it was drinking wrath, but God in grace calls His own out of all association with that which is about to receive an infliction of heaven sent plagues for sins which had been so joined one to another in an unbroken series, that while taking place on earth, they had stretched away to heaven. She had inflicted grievous torments on others ; she had mixed a cup of trembling for many, of whom the world was not worthy ; the chalice was now to be presented to her own lips with a double mixture, and her torment and sorrow should be meted out to her to a degree corresponding to her luxurious life and self-glorification. She had known something of vicissitudes. After a thousand years of supremacy, one after another of the nations began to repudiate her authority and to escape

from under her yoke; but, adapting herself to the changed condition of things she succeeded in replacing it, in an apparently enduring form, and in such manner that she could confidently say that she would never know widowhood or sorrow. Ah! the One who judgeth her is strong, and her self-gratulation comes to an abrupt termination, for suddenly death, and mourning, and famine, and consuming fire come upon her. The kings of the earth had been living luxuriously and unlawfully with her, now they see the smoke of her burning and lament her; that is to say, they see the effect of the judgment which is inflicted upon her, and while they lament the end of that which was a source of gratification to them, they disclaim now association with her, they stand afar off in fear that what has come upon her will reach to them. It was a great city, it was a mighty city, and besides, it was the market for their commodities. They had many things to sell. They could offer the glorious and delectable things of the world to her; but what use could the bride of Christ make of these? If she were really what she assumed to be, her treasure would have been in heaven, from whence she would have been looking for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ to take her away to the prepared mansions in glory. But she was not that at all. She might claim the estates, and bring forward suborned

witnesses to prove her title, but it was all useless. The wares she dealt in were of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and bodies and souls of men ; and not in love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. This traffic in which she was engaged disclosed her character ; she was of the earth earthy, and only that. The devil had shown the Lord Jesus the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and had offered them to Him only to receive a command to leave His presence ; His pretended spouse accepts it all and from the same source , she clothes herself with fine linen, and purple, and scarlet ; and decks herself with gold, and precious stones, and pearls ! But the Spirit of God by another apostle had said : “ Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel ; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the

holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves.”

The list of commodities of which this great city made merchandise closes with bodies and souls of men. The latter all know to be a source of revenue through masses said for the dead, but the former we have little knowledge of except as from time to time there is a slight lifting of the veil which hides the interior working of institutions otherwise hidden in impenetrable mystery, disclosing a state of things of such character, that we need to remember the word of scripture, and to possess our souls in patience, “until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart.”

Heaven and earth are called upon to rejoice over the execution of God's vengeance upon Babylon. A great stone cast by a mighty angel into the sea, over which the waters of oblivion close, expresses her most complete destruction.

Many voices had been heard in this great city, but not one of them had attracted a heart to Christ, or touched a conscience as to sin against Him. There was much to divert, much to interest, and much to occupy. There was the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers and trumpeters. There was the

voice of the bridegroom and of the bride. There was the light of candles, and the hum of industry, but neither the one nor the other should be heard or seen in her any more forever.

It will perhaps be asked : Is there any harm in the list of commodities which Babylon dealt in, either in their use, their purchase or their sale? But that is perhaps the very reason why they are enumerated, as well as that the voices heard in her are specified. Apart from the bodies and souls of men, there is nothing objectionable in the list, but this is the gravity of it: she has made them so. She has taken up things which are in themselves useful, perhaps necessary, and has employed them to keep souls from God. Having undertaken to make heaven secure for her votaries, she leads them into paths which shut them out from heaven, and if in the meantime a conscience should become disturbed, she has her palliatives ready and penances are prescribed as perfectly satisfying God's righteous requirements.

But there was more : " In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." The annals of christian martyrdom exceed in horror anything that has ever besides been chronicled of persecutions, of tortures, and of most cruel deaths. The Holy Inquisition alone boasts of

having exterminated some hundreds of thousands of heretics. Some were burned ; some were beheaded ; some found relief in death from the tortures inflicted upon them, and they were God's saints and prophets. The spirit of religious intolerance finds its home in the human heart, and if in mixed communities this sentiment is restrained of necessity, it is always there ready to expand when the conditions favorable to its growth exist. Is it thought incredible that a state of things should again arise like that of which we read ? Church unions indicate the laxity of principle for the sake of union as to many things which in the past great sacrifices were made to maintain ; and a readiness to yield convictions of truth for the maintenance of which our fathers were willing to lay down their lives, and every where the trend Rome-ward is apparent to the most disinterested observer. If there is the almost universal acceptance, in some of the greatest church organizations, of candles, crosses, crucifixes, masses, confessionals and vestments, with hymns of worship to the virgin Mary, and prayers for the dead, how much, we may well ask, is there remaining of this road to be travelled ?

CHAPTER XIX.

If there is consternation upon earth there is rejoicing in heaven. A great voice of much people is heard saying, "Alleluia." The four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fall down and worship God, saying, "Amen ; Alleluia." A voice out of the throne says, "Praise our God," and the refrain is taken up by a great multitude as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings saying, "Alleluia." The great corruptress of the truth, who had poisoned the wells of water from which the people drank, was now judged, and the blood of the faithful martyred servants was now avenged upon her.

The wicked usurper having been disposed of, the true bride of the Lamb is next presented ; and with what relief we turn from the contemplation of a hideous picture to that which fills our hearts with joy and calls forth the glad acclaims of the heavenly hosts. "The marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready." The laborious, incessant work of two thousand years has been completed, and that upon

which all this labor has been bestowed is about now to be displayed to the praise and glory of the wisdom, the love, and the power of the One who has accomplished it all from such unpromising material. Often, as viewed from a human standpoint, all had been destroyed by the unceasing activity of the enemy, and by natural proclivities which continually traversed the heavenly aspirations the Holy Ghost was ever occupied in producing. But all that is now past, and like as some great sculptor who has been occupied for a lifetime on a statue which is his crowning work, at last announces the day of unveiling, all are in expectancy, and shouts of approbation are raised as the masterpiece suddenly stands out in bold relief to the unbounded admiration of assembled friends ; so also as the nuptial day approaches there are many guests bidden to the marriage supper for an event is to transpire of exceeding interest ; the Lord of heaven and earth, the King of kings, is about to take to Himself a bride, but in what character? As the Lamb ! The union is based upon redemption, and if the bride has been brought to her present state of attractive beauty by the assiduous care of the bridegroom, she had in the first place been redeemed by His blood. Some of us remember the bringing home of a danish bride to the heir apparent of the british throne, and as the imposing array of

gaily decorated battleships took their way up the Thames in sight of hundreds of thousands of cheering spectators, our thoughts, it may be, went on to another scene and another bride of which the earthly pageant could present but the feeblest figure.

Two things are specially noted as to the bride ; she has made herself ready ; and it was granted to her to be arrayed in fine linen, bright and pure. The questions arise ; how has she made herself ready ? and why, and in what manner is she thus arrayed ?

The church ; the ecclesia of Christ ; the called out ones, had been endowed with rich and varied gifts. Redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, the written word of God, the scriptures of truth revealed the mind and will of God, and led the redeemed souls through various exercises into conformity, with that mind and will. The Holy Spirit sent down from heaven as the witness of the glorification of Christ, took up His abode in the church, not only corporately, but in individual members, there to lead the soul into occupation with Christ, and to re-produce His image therein. But there was more. For the perfecting of the saints, gifts had been given to men, some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, " till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto

the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." God by His Spirit had wrought a work in His saints through various instrumentalities, and had given grace to effectuate outwardly that which He had wrought inwardly ; the result of this work becomes apparent when the obscuring medium through which on earth it had been viewed has been cleared away ; the body of humiliation changed to a body of glory ; and the fallen, sinful, and irremediable nature finally and forever escaped from.

It is true that in many christians there is but little if any apparent progress of soul, and the words of the apostle to the Galatians may often be applied : " I stand in doubt of you." We are told by geologists that in the earlier formations there are the fossilized remains of creatures of such an undecided character that it is difficult to say whether they belonged to the animal or vegetable kingdom, and if there was life there was no movement to indicate it, and so it is with many christians who forget the injunction to make their calling and election sure. But whether the individual growth had been little or much, the church in its entirety is now presented to Christ " a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish." If the response to the labor bestowed has appeared

disappointing, God's purposes of grace cannot be frustrated and at last there is the completed work, the wife of the Lamb hath made herself ready.

Furthermore, a spotless robe is granted her, the righteousnesses of saints. She has been manifested before a tribunal where all her works have been surveyed ; the combustible part has been destroyed ; the acceptable works acknowledged, and rewarded ; and, clothed with these, as with a garment, she presents an entrancing picture of what the power and the wisdom and the grace of God has produced.

Even the invited guests may well be written down happy. For four thousand years, from creation to the cross, there had been an unbroken line of witnesses for God upon earth, but they had not been indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and were not part of that assembly which the Lord had told Peter He was about to build. They had however been raised in glory and theirs would be the happiness of being guests at this marriage supper.

It is remarkable that some unannounced personage should supplement the voice of much people in heaven ; of the four and twenty elders ; of the voice out of the throne, and the voice of the great multitude, by two distinct statements interjected as it were abruptly into the narrative of transpiring events. Our attention is

thus specially directed to the fact that there are called ones apart from the Lamb's wife, and that these are the true words of God. There is more perhaps conveyed in the first statement than appears on the surface, the second is auxiliary to it. The church is unique in all the wonderful works of God. Constructed of material that another builder would have rejected as worthless ; material that in many cases, even from the standpoint of a human standard of morals, was only fit to be burned. Yet this had always been true as to God's saved ones ; whence then the difference ? The difference lies in this. Although in the past there had been those who had walked with God ; those who had spoken to Him face to face ; those to whom He had committed miraculous powers ; those who so pleased Him that they were taken away to His presence without seeing death ; and one who had been His special forerunner to prepare in the wilderness a highway for our God ; all wonderfully blest, wonderfully honoured, and in an enviable place of nearness to God, yet the weakest saint of this dispensation, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and joined to Christ upon the throne of God, is greater than any of those blessed ones of the past age, for it is not for us merely the fact of salvation, blessed as that is, it is not merely the display of the one upon whom the Lamb has set His love, all

this is most precious, yet in addition to it all, this unique creation is also a holy temple. It had been, even in its weakness and in the midst of a defiled scene, a spiritual house ; in heaven it is a holy temple. Now a temple is not built to remain void, and the temple that God builds is for His own occupancy. When on earth the church had been an habitation of God through the Spirit, its erection had been with an exhibition of divine power and glory, and God was manifestly in the midst of His own, but afterwards the house was allowed by its keepers to fall into such a dilapidated condition that the holy Occupant had of necessity to adapt His operations to the character of things brought in by the responsible members, but in that coming period all will be changed, there will be no lapses in heaven ; no earthly attractions to lure the soul from Christ ; no arch-enemy to destroy ; and no evil nature to be wrought upon ; all will be to His glory, for the perfection of comeliness of His bride is the result of His own work ; and to the knowledge of His mind through the indwelling Spirit, and to the readiness to act for His glory, will be added the power of accomplishment ; and so the energy of the Holy Spirit hereafter will be directed through a human channel, and the mighty works of God be wrought by a glorified company, with the fullest knowledge of good

and evil ; for those who will be led of God the Spirit and used of Him, will be a rescued creation once led captive by Satan at his will. What greater display could be given of the wisdom and power of God.

To be invited to such a marriage supper will be a distinguished honor, and such will be blessed, but Oh ! the ineffable joy of being part of that exalted and glorious company upon whom the Lamb of God will have set His love ; who will enjoy His confidences ; and to whom the maintenance of His glory as Son of man will be committed.

The one who communicates these true words of God seems to the prophet an object of worship, but he has to learn that the spirit of prophecy in this revelation is the testimony of Jesus, and that God only is to be worshipped.

In the eleventh chapter there was the announcement, on the sounding of the seventh trumpet, that the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ had come ; that He had taken His great power and had reigned ; that the nations were angry, and His wrath had come. In the sixteenth chapter, as the seventh vial was poured out, a great voice out of the heavenly temple, and out of the throne, said : " It is done." In the nineteenth chapter the details of these closing scenes are given in so far as they have not been given in old

testament prophecies. Heaven is opened and the Conqueror comes forth. His name is Faithful and True ; His name is the Word of God ; His name is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and He is now openly revealed in these several characters.

Wars among men are characterised by unrighteousness, both in inception and execution. Rapine or revenge are for the most part the inducing motive, and brutality and cruelty are the necessary accompaniments, but the One who is Faithful and True judges and makes war in perfect righteousness.

He is the expression of the mind of God ; all things are plain and opened to His eyes ; besides, He is the Wearer of many diadems, not the crowns of the victor merely, but crowns which imply an inherent right in the wearer. When Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah came up as a deputation from the captives at Babylon to the builders of the temple, their sacred offering was to be an abiding memorial. Crowns were to be made for Joshua the high priest of their silver and gold, because the time was coming when the antitype would be revealed in the Branch who would be the Priest upon the throne, the divine Redeemer, and gold alone or silver alone would be a faulty presentment. All things are His by creation ; all things are His by inheritance ; all things are His by

purchase ; all things are His by conquest ; and, wonder of wonders, every right, every title, every prerogative which He has as Son of man is shared with His co-heirs.

He had a name written that no man knew but He Himself. No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father He hath declared Him. God dwells in light that no man has approached unto, or can approach unto, yet man, in his fatuity, in every age since the cross, has thought if there was one subject more than another which he has been competent to discuss and elucidate, it has been that of the person of the Christ, that unfathomable mystery of godliness.

Clothed with a vesture dipped in blood and called the Word of God, the assurance is given, that whether in burning scrutiny ; in kingly authority ; in incomprehensible character ; or in sanguinary judgment ; He is ever and always the expression of the mind of God.

But He is more ; He is King of kings and Lord of lords. The armies of heaven follow Him ; irresistible in conquering power and energy ; and manifestly suitable attendants upon the One who judges and makes war in righteousness. Heaven's uniform is fine linen, clean and white.

There are now three things said as to this great King. A sharp sword proceedeth out of His mouth by which He smites the nations ; He rules them with a rod of iron ; and He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of God the Almighty.

Smiting the nations with the sword of His mouth and treading the wine-press are judicial ; ruling with a rod of iron is administrative. It is now the great and dreadful day of the Lord. There has been patience, there has been delay. There have been awful manifestations of divine anger, and many calls to repentance ; but all has been in vain ; and the Judge arises to execute His work, His strange work, and cut it short in righteousness. It is the judgment of the nations of which the Lord spake to His disciples as recorded in the 25th chapter of Matthew's gospel.

It is evident that the smiting of the nations and the treading the wine-press are distinct and separate acts of judgment. God's ancient people are not reckoned among the nations, and the vine is a figure used for them in scripture. It will be remembered that this is the second time in the prophecy that the treading of the wine-press is spoken of ; in the former case the treading was without the city, evidently in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, and before the coming forth of the armies of heaven, while this is clearly a

subsequent act. In the former, the Son of man is seated upon the cloud and angelic powers are used to gather the vintage; here, the Lord has descended to the earth and there is no word of angelic agencies. That was evidently Judah, returned to the land in unbelief of whom Jehovah had said : " I will consider in my dwelling place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches." This, on the other hand, is the judgment of the tribes of Ephraim, whom God will bring into the wilderness and plead with face to face, and cause them to pass under the rod, and will bring them into the bond of the covenant, and will purge out from among them the rebels and them that transgress against Him, and will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel. The scene of this judgment is consequently not near Jerusalem nor in the land, but beyond the Jordan and the Dead sea, and to this Isaiah's prophetic utterances it would seem allude.

" Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? "

“ I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”

“ Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat?”

“ I have trodden the wine-press alone ; and of the peoples there was none with me ; so I trod them in mine anger, and trampled them in my fury ; and their blood was sprinkled upon my garments and I have stained all my raiment, for the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.”

An angel stands in the sun, that great governing and controlling body of this earth's movements ; and in a loud voice, bids to the great supper of God.

This invitation has been read so many times, has been preached from, and quoted so continuously, that with many the words have lost their force, and if any thought is conveyed by them, it is that they are a sort of allegory ; but the words of that voice are recorded in all their awful import, and the day is fast approaching when they will find their fulfillment in scenes of distress, dismay and desolation, exceeding anything that the earth has ever before witnessed. The deluge was universal in its effects, this will not be ; but there, awful as it was, the dark waters closed at once over the heads of the doomed sinners, silencing forever their voices as they disappeared from view, but the marshalling of the nations before the Son of man to

hear their just and unchangeable sentence, as they are consigned to everlasting fire, is far beyond the previous judgment, inasmuch as the sins have been committed against the light of God's revelation of Himself in the person of His Son.

When the eternal Son of God came down from heaven to dwell in a holy tabernacle of flesh and blood, it pleased Him to come in such lowliness that no person, however humble or despised, should be awed by His presence, or deterred from seeking His gracious help in time of need through the interposing barriers which usually surround the great of this world. He was meek and lowly in heart ; God was in Him reconciling the world unto Himself, not, for the time being, imputing trespasses ; but for His love He received hatred, and, rejected as come in grace and truth, He returned to the scene whence He had descended, but in a new character, hitherto unseen and unknown in heaven, as a glorified man ; and taking His seat upon the throne of God He awaits with patience the gradual development of all divine purposes. But what marvellous grace and condescension that the One so exalted should explain to His saints, not only all the events which are to transpire down to the close of time, but the import of them ; so that standing with Him on this Pisgah of observation, our wondering eyes

look out over an expanse of revelation which stirs our hearts to their depths. Amazing that saved sinners should ever have been brought into such holy and blessed confidences, the confidences of intimate and trusted friendship !

And this same Jesus will come again, but to the world that rejected Him it will be in judgment. There will be the insignia of royalty ; the unapproachable position ; the destructive judicial power. Not now a poor man, brought up in humble surroundings, followed by a few illiterate fishermen and a hungry rabble ; accessible to all ; ministering to all ; but, coming in glory, His holy angels with Him ; then seating Himself upon His throne of glory and gathering the nations before Him for judgment. Some will have accepted His heralds and their announcement, and will be received into His favor and share His blessings, others will be the objects of wrath for they have declared that they would not have this Man to reign over them.

“ And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.”

The progressive steps by which the wicked race had advanced from the state of abject terror which

was apparent as the judgments of God began to be inflicted, until we reach the desperately hardened state which this verse presents, we have considered as we have followed the various revealed events the book discloses to us. Naturally, it would seem incredible that men should ever reach such a state of hardihood as to be found with arms in their hands to fight against the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, yet Pharaoh ages before, had seen the glory of Jehovah which was the rearward of His people, and had not been restrained from his determination to attack them ; he had seen an exhibition of divine power in the passage made through the deep sea for the people of God to pass over, and in his blind folly he had followed in to his destruction ; such is man.

As to the final and dreadful conflicts which occur in the land of Judea, as the times of the gentiles reach their conclusion, scripture tells us elsewhere, of the ravages of the king of the north, and his successful career ; his conquest of Jerusalem ; the revival of his ancient hostility to Egypt, and his advances against her ; the disquieting news he hears ; his precipitate return ; the vast confederacy he forms against the western powers ; his final overthrow ; broken on the mountain without hands ; the destruction of the armies which had come against Jerusalem, or have come for

her defence, for she will be found a burdensome stone in that day. Ships shall come from Chittim against the Assyrian, and if the ships of Tarshish are foremost in bringing back the dispersed people of God's ancient and future heritage, the day of Jehovah of hosts shall be upon all these ships, that the loftiness of man may be bowed down and Jehovah alone be exalted in that day; and furthermore, it is at this time when the assembled kings marvel, are troubled and hasten away, that the ships of Tarshish are broken with an east wind. Thus if Egypt and Chittim have recently become appendages of Great Britain, and the ships of Tarshish, by inference her navy, the boasting and confidence now so general are destined to reach an ignominious termination, indeed we know that it is God's purpose to abase all that exalteth itself, and he would be bold indeed who would assert that there is no spirit of exaltation abroad at the present time.

But all this is beyond the record, and we must hasten to return.

The roman emperor has come up with his own and confederated armies to the defence of Jerusalem, for the scornful men who rule there have made a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell. Their fear has been of the overflowing scourge, the dreaded Assyrian, but they shall find that the Lord

Jehovah has laid in Zion a tried stone, a precious corner stone for a foundation, and He will lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet. The romans come up only to find a greater and mightier foe than Asshur, but not deterred by the glorious appearance of the heavenly host, they join issue, with this awful, this appalling result, the armies are completely destroyed and the two leaders are cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone, the receptacle, a thousand years later, of the devil, his angels and all the wicked dead.

Two men, living, it may be, at the present time on the earth, have reserved for them this most dreadful fate, for these, like the betrayer of the Lord, had yielded themselves to satanic guidance in direct and deadly hostility to their Creator. Their offence so exceeds all others, and the evidences of their guilt are so unmistakable, that arraignment before the great tribunal would be superfluous, and so their judgment tarries not.

But there is another in this trinity of evil, the author of all sin ; of all insubjection to God ; of all rebellion against His Son. Once the most exalted, the most gifted, the most glorious of all created beings, now the most abject and degraded. An angel comes down from heaven, not even a mighty angel, just one

of the angelic host, and lays hold upon the dragon, that old serpent the accuser, the adversary, binds him and casts him into the abyss. What a profound humiliation for the prince of the powers of the air, the god and prince of this world ! Is it any wonder that he should hinder by every means he can make use of, the reading and the understanding of a book which declares his doom. For a thousand years Satan will be in durance, and for that period he will be restrained from deceiving the nations ; but will there be no sin ; will man's nature be changed ? Alas ! man's failure in responsibility during the millenium will be more marked than ever before, for while now he can give full rein to his wicked impulses and charge all upon the devil, and even with awful blasphemy accuse God for allowing Satan to be abroad ; it will be then apparent, beyond all controversy, that the imagination of his heart is evil from his youth, and that all he can do under the most favorable circumstances is unavailing to bridge the gulf that separates him from God. Then, as now, and as ever, man must be born again to be in the kingdom of God. Then man's natural depravity of heart will be manifested, for the unbelieving mass will at the end be giving a feigned obedience, and on Satan's re-appearance will flock to his standard only to be devoured by God's consuming fire from heaven.

But how blessed that there is another side to this picture ; there are thrones and throne-sitters. Daniel, in his vision, had seen the thrones set up ; the Ancient of days sitting ; an everlasting dominion given Him ; and the saints possessing the kingdom.

It is unnecessary to say who were sitting on those thrones, the record is merely, they sat upon them. In the first chapter, it is said of the saints : “ He hath made us a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father.” In the fourth chapter are seen four and twenty thrones and four and twenty elders sitting on them surrounding a central throne, the throne of God ; and these are the only thrones in heaven. If then they are again presented it is to give us a further revelation ; judgment was given to the throne-sitters, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

From the time that God's rest was broken, after the creation, by the rebellion of man, He began at once His vaster operations in which would be displayed His manifold wisdom, His infinite power, His inexhaustible love. This earth was to be the theatre, and His ruined creature man the object for the display of His moral glory, and as the vast operations are now drawing to a close, the one who has opened his heart to receive His instructions can survey these operations, and enter, with some degree of intelligence, into the ways of God.

The two classes of martyrs who had suffered death during the tribulation period, the one under a papal and the other under an infidel persecution, we see here identified with the elders of a previous scene. If the rapture of the saints completed the first resurrection there would be no place for these martyrs, as scripture only speaks of two resurrections, that of the just and that of the unjust ; but when these are raised and given bodily life, the heavenly company is complete ; never again will saints of God be taken to heaven ; if any die during the millenium they can have no part in the first resurrection ; the lists are closed ; they can only have part in the second, and that will be for judgment, so that death during the thousand years will be punitive.

The first company gave a positive testimony, the second a negative ; for before the latter come upon the scene, great darkness is prevailing, and they are like those who grope their way.

Antiochus Epimines made every effort to destroy the sacred writings in his day, when he had conquered the people, and he nearly succeeded. Again a similar effort will be made, and the word of God which is now so widely diffused, so great a comfort, and so blessed a guide to the saints will be sought for in vain. " Behold the days come, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I will send

a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Jehovah ; and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of Jehovah, and shall not find it.”

All who have part in the first resurrection reign with Christ a thousand years.

When we undertake to judge of other scenes, and other circumstances, our judgment is necessarily relative ; we have no basis upon which to form our judgment but that of present surroundings, and when we read that the saints shall not only judge the world, but judge angels, the mind is lost in the thought of having to do with incorporate beings in any way, particularly judicially. They kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, and they are consequently reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day—whatever may be the meaning of the judgment of angels. The coming millennial age will not be in subjection to angelic beings, but to men, and the rights and powers of men will be vested in the Son of man. For a thousand years there will be incessant occupation for the saints in the government of the world. There will then be an absolute monarchy. Democracy will have had its day ; it is not God's order.

Independency is what man likes ; subjection and obedience are God's appointment.

The rest of the dead lived not again for a thousand years. It is not that there was unconsciousness ; there was no human existence, and no human life until the expiration of that period, and then their bodies will again be given them, those bodies which were once used as instruments of unrighteousness, and in those they will be judged. Those hands once stretched forth in sinful acts ; those feet once swift to shed blood ; that tongue once used for deceit ; those lips under which were once the poison of asps ; that mouth once full of cursing and bitterness ; those once wanton eyes ; all those guilty members will be there to testify to the righteous judgment which consigns the resurrected sinner to eternal death ; an endless, unchanging, unmitigated state of misery and despair.

Vast numbers of the human race have sunk down beneath the waters of the sea, and on the ocean bed their bones have crumbled away in the silence of those unmoving depths. Vast numbers have found graves in the earth, and their bodies have rotted away, nourishing as they did so the inanimate and unconscious vegetable life above them ; but from the sea and from the cemetery rise the innumerable companies who have been summoned to the last great assize. What

unhappy recognitions will there be in that day ! The deceived and the deceiver will meet again ; the betrayed and the betrayer ; the murdered and the murderer. No alibi can be proven ; no change of venue allowed ; no advocate will hold a brief for an accused client ; no suborned witnesses will testify to an innocence which does not exist. The throne before which they are arraigned is great, it is insurmountable ; it is white, it is set in perfect righteousness, and the Judge at whose presence the heaven and earth flee away, who is He ? It is the One who stood before Pilate's judgment seat ; the One who patiently endured the mocking, the scourging and the spitting of His wicked creatures. Where, now, are those who placed the crown of thorns upon His head ; arrayed Him in royal purple ; and with an assumed and insulting homage bowed the knee to Him, as they hailed Him King of the jews ? Where now are those who wagged the head, shot out the tongue, and with a callousness and hard-heartedness well nigh incredible, could call upon Him to come down from the cross, that cross of torture and anguish upon which the weight of His body was sustained by the nails which had been driven through His hands and feet ; that cross from which He looked in vain for comforters. Alas ! it was surrounded by those who in heartless indifference gaped and stared upon Him.

But all is now changed. The Judge has taken His seat upon the throne. It is the last great session ; the Oyer and Terminer of the human race. The prisoners are disposed before the throne. Antediluvians and postdiluvians are there ; unbelievers of every form, and from every clime. Those who were great in that world which has passed away, and those who were of no repute. All the past history of every child of Adam will be found recorded in the books as they are opened ; and then it will not be a chain of circumstantial evidence, forged link by link, but positive and conclusive. The names are not found written in the Lamb's book of life, if so they would not have been among the dead ; they are cast into the lake of fire. Their bodies had been in death, their souls had been in hades, both death and hades are emptied into the lake of fire.

No words can equal the intensity of meaning conveyed in this brief announcement. There they have stood on the page of sacred writ in all their terse and awful import, for well nigh nineteen centuries ; and there they will stand till the end of time, warning passengers on the broad and easy road of the place to which it leads. No superfluous words cloud the meaning, or permit another interpretation ; there is no ambiguity, no uncertainty ; a child cannot misunderstand them, nor an infidel disavow them ; and the

remorse which those will know, who, having learned God's purpose of judgment through His word, and with careless indifference disregarded it, will be profound ; will be unremitting ; will be eternal.

Leaving for the present the revelation which the first five verses of chapter **xxi** give us, the three succeeding verses contrast the portion of the saved and the unsaved. The One who sits upon the throne says to the prophet : " It is done." Once before, as the last of the last series of judgments was in execution, a great voice out of the temple of heaven said : " It is done," for then the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ had come. Now there is a re-creation, all things are new. God's dealings with a fallen race are over. The seven thousand years of the state of things we are acquainted with have passed ; those who have desired to drink of the fountain of life have slaked their thirst ; those who by grace have been overcomers enter upon their undefined but illimitable possessions, while unbelieving sinners are again warned of their inevitable fate.

But between these two periods, that of the first resurrection and the second, intervenes a thousand years of earthly prosperity and blessing of which old testament prophets have spoken. That is not referred to here, it would not be a revelation, but in the

entrancing picture of the new Jerusalem we are given to see the relationship which will then exist between the heavenly and the earthly saints.

A marriage ceremony had taken place, the bride, dressed in spotless white had been openly received into a joint occupation of the throne, and her appearance in that character as connected governmentally with the earth is presented to us. That is to say, viewed from the heavenly side, we have the bride, the Lamb's wife ; but the bride in relationship with the earth becomes a city ; now cities in the past were centres of power and government, as Ninevah, Babylon, and Rome ; and thus this holy city is seen as it descends out of heaven from God, for the time has come when the saints are to take the kingdom. It is a magnificent spectacle ; the earth has not before seen such a sight, for there is the glory of God in the jasper-like coruscation that illumines the world. Jerusalem, the city of the great King, which but erstwhile was called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified, is now bathed in the ambient and refulgent rays of that glory with which heaven is familiar, but which a cursed earth had not heretofore had definite connection with.

The salient characteristics of the holy city are next presented. A wall great and high ; twelve gates, with names of the twelve tribes of Israel on them ; twelve

angels at the gates ; twelve foundations, and on them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, all connected with its governmental aspect. Why should there be a great and high wall, and portals, and gate keepers to this glorious, this inaccessible city? Heretofore nations have been given power and authority and they have used such for their own glory ; now God is going to have a government wholly according to His own mind, and so perfectly has all been ordered by divine wisdom in this connection, that no loftiness of man can scale those walls, no base design enter in at the gates past the ever watchful porters, and God in grace has connected the names of the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve apostles with that delectable city so effectively that throughout all eternity the objects of His grace will ever be associated with the manifestation of His glory.

It may be said that the connection of the twelve apostles of the Lamb with the holy city is evident enough, for are we not built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; but why the twelve tribes of the children of Israel? It is the argument in the eleventh chapter of romans that God has not cast away His people, and Paul himself was a living witness of the fact ; if then the Lord is purposed to build an assembly

upon the immovable and imperishable Rock, the beginning of that structure is not apart from His chosen race, but in connection with them ; and if in that gospel which presents to us the Son of man, the command was to begin at Jerusalem ; in that which presents to us the Messiah of the jews, it is blessed to see that the commission is world wide ; and if the names of the tribes appear on the gates, it is to the twelve apostles of the Lamb upon whom the city is built, that the promise is given, that they shall hereafter sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The dimensions of this rectangular city are taken by a divine measure, and are found to be twelve thousand stadia, length and breadth and height being equal ; that is to say, if every detail of the city has a governmental significance, then, taken in its entirety, it is the same thought a thousand fold developed, and in that development the symmetry is even more apparent. How perfect the government of the world will be in that coming age ! A King shall reign in righteousness, and His happy coadjutors will be the willing and effective executors of His holy will. Then it will not be as with the angels waiting for His commands, but heaven's executive will have an intuitive knowledge of that will, for an indwelling and ungrieved Spirit will

communicate the deep things of God to attentive and receptive hearts where no selfish interests, and no unbroken wills clash with divine behests, but one unbroken, continuous and everlasting harmony of thought, word and action will pervade those holy, happy, heavenly citizens.

The wall was great and high when the enclosure and the entrances were in view, but when another thought is to be presented, it is according to the measure of a man, that is of an angel, of definite measurement ; it is twelve times the number of divine government in the hands of man. Two thoughts present themselves to our minds in this connection ; one is that the wall is not as high as the city, and the other that it was built of jasper. It will be remembered that the glorious light emitted by the throne Sitter in an earlier chapter was as the light of a jasper and a sardius, so that when we find here the first foundation of jasper and the wall of the same, we at once connect both these with the One so gloriously presented. When the holy city was seen descending out of heaven from God, its light was the glory of God, like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Its first foundation was of jasper ; its wall was of jasper ; its light was jasper, and all is Christ.

The wall was one hundred and forty-four cubits high ; that was sufficient for an enclosure ; but the city was twelve thousand stadia in height. There is no thought here that the saints will lose their individuality in that bright glory ; no realization of the foolish dream of buddhism—absorption into pure Nirvana ; but the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and one star will be found to differ from another star in glory ; yet in the midst of all the blessed liberty no thought will extend beyond the retaining wall of the love of Christ, no one there will ever dream of another foundation than that which is laid, and no light will be reflected other than the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

In this connection, as we have seen, jasper is first mentioned, as it is the first foundation, but in the list of stones upon the high priest's breastplate it is the last. There, it was looking forward to a coming glory, now it is looking back to that which has been manifested. Again, the one who had been in Eden the garden of God, and whose covering every precious stone had been, had jasper as the sixth, that ominous number of imperfection ; omen subsequently verified in his downfall.

The names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb were inscribed upon the foundations, and these were

garnished with all manner of precious stones. The moral glories of the Lord Jesus were thus identified, not only with His faithful apostles who had continued with Him in His temptation, but with the assembly which He had built. Furthermore, the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. There is but one road there, there are not various ways, and the ground of the walk of the saints is not only divine, the motives are transparent; alas! now, they are often neither the one nor the other.

There is no temple there; no going up to the house of God together; no question of this mountain, or of Jerusalem, as rival places where men ought to worship, but the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. Here, a place of worship implies intermittence, and although the Spirit of God has said: "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting," yet the response from the heart of man as the Spirit strikes the slackened chords is often feeble and inharmonious; there, how different! There, the heart will be full of joy, the lips of praise; there, there will be no need to incite to worship by aesthetic accessories; every movement of the heart; every thought of the mind; every word from the mouth will be eucharistic.

There is no need of the light of the sun or moon in that holy heavenly city, for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. No obscurity prevails there ; no clouds arise ; no darkening influences exist ; but one unchanging, unending glory pervades the scene in which the unconcealed deeds are manifest, that they are wrought in God. The nations walk in the light of that heavenly glory, the kings bring their glory unto it. " In that day I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth ; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil ; and they shall hear Jezreel."

The gates of the temple of Janus were kept open in time of war, and closed in time of peace ; they were closed but once ; the gates of the heavenly city, on the contrary, are never closed, and it is the reign of the Prince of peace. No wily foe can approach under the cover of darkness, for there is none there. One unending day of unalloyed delight goes on forever. No clocks strike the hour, for time has ceased. No setting sun invites to rest, for there is no night and no weariness.

Oh ! Jerusalem the golden, city of foundations, city of the living God ; the ardent longings of our hearts are towards thee ; and as with wistful eyes we look away towards thy coming glory, we seem almost to

catch a glimpse of thy lofty pinnacles, thy pearly portals, and thy jasper walls.

We have seen that the city has but one street, now in the last chapter of our blessed book we see it has also one river and one tree. The river flows from the throne of God and the Lamb, it is clear as crystal, it is the river of water of life ; it is the river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God. No drought of summer dries up the river, no convulsion of nature changes its course. Its source is inexhaustible, its flow perennial, and the river of God is full of water. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying : If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters (but this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive, for the Spirit was not yet ; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"

When we come to a consideration of the tree of life we find a presentation that completely traverses human reason. This tree is planted in the middle of the street ; it is also on either side of the river ; it bears twelve manner of fruits ; the yield is monthly ; and the leaves are medicinal. Our first knowledge of this tree goes back six thousand years, when we find

it planted in the midst of the garden of Eden. Then the conditions were different, and it was adapted to the requirements of innocent man. There was neither twelve fruits, nor twelve months, nor healing in the leaves. Whence the difference?

Our Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the tree of life. He is the way, the truth, and the life; He is in the midst of the city; in the very midst of its single street; and apart from Him there is no created existence, no life. There is extraordinary vitality in that heavenly city, but He is the source of all life and power. The river flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb; it is the blessed energy of the Holy Spirit, but on either side of the river is there the tree of life; there is no disseverance in divine actings, and the basis of life for us is the work of the cross. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." If the holy city is to be a source of blessing to the nations which walk in the light of it, it is just as necessary for the heavenly ones then as for us now to be feeding upon a crucified, a risen and a glorified Saviour. We have life by feeding upon Him, by faith we have appropriated the efficacy of His death, but if any should think that eating of Him is limited to this life, they have but to look at the picture presented to us to see that if a ministry of Christ in

healing power is committed to the saints, the preparation for this administration, the sustainment in it, is by continued eating of the fruit of the tree of life which grows in the midst of the street, and on either side of the river.

No more curse there, no nature to which the curse attached has found an entrance ; the adam life has been judged at the cross and discarded, it was unfit for the glory. That is the negative side ; the positive is that the throne of God and of the Lamb is in it ; that His servants serve Him ; they see His face, and His name is in their foreheads. Exalted as will be the position of the glorified saints, there will be no independency, no self-assertion ; their greatest joy will be their service, for it springs from devotion to the Lamb. The promise that they shall see His face is a blessed one, for this is the thought that the child of God cherishes above all others. We love Him because He first loved us and gave Himself for us. Through grace we have been given faith to believe on One whom we have not yet seen ; but the thought of looking upon that face once for us more marred than any man's, seeing Himself in all His radiant glory, is the one that is ever uppermost in the mind of the christian ; the thought that cheers and encourages in times of trial and difficulty ; sustains along the whole course of the path of life, and makes

the hour of death one of triumph and rejoicing. It will be wonderful to see and know all that will be seen and known in that day. The crowns, the thrones, the white stone, the heavenly city will all be of deep and lasting interest, but above and beyond all we shall see our Saviour's face ; we shall see the One whose love has won our hearts ; whose grace has bound us to Him ; whose power has sustained, and whose wisdom has guided us every step of our christian life through the world. Then there will be no fear, no shame in the confession of His name ; happy they who find none now. Then His impress will be stamped upon every brow ; every lineament, every feature, will proclaim them as His ; the Lord God shines upon them, and they reign for the ages of ages.

And now, the great vision has passed ; scene after scene had unfolded before the wondering eyes of the apostle, revealing the history of the church and of the world from the days of John until the days of the Son of man. Is it all a mere dream, are the figures which have been seen, and the words which have been uttered the creation of a disordered mind ? No, the angel who had shewed him them all is still there, and he assures him that these sayings are faithful and true, the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets having sent His angel to shew them unto His servant, for the time of

their fulfilment was near. No wonder the apostle should be awed by his heavenly visitor and seek to do him homage, but after all he is only another of God's creatures, just a fellow-servant, and not at all an object of worship ; that can only be offered to God.

The prophet Daniel, whose prophecies were in part concerning the times of the end of which this book speaks, was told to seal up the words of the prophecy ; now the instruction is to seal them not, the time was at hand ; a time of a fixed and unalterable condition that will answer morally to that in which each person will be found when the end comes. The Lord is about to descend from heaven ; there is an increasing awakening as to this ; lamps are being trimmed everywhere ; alas ! some afford no light, it is but the splutter of an oilless wick ; then the unrighteous and the filthy continue so ; the righteous who needed no Saviour, get none ; the holy, those who have washed their robes, have right to the tree of life and enter in through the gates into the city ; the others are without, they can never enter ; in the word of God there is no hint of post-mortem restoration.

It is now another voice that is heard as the book approaches its completion ; the angel is no longer seen or heard ; he has been a messenger, and having deliver-

ed his message he gives place to the Alpha and Omega who is coming quickly. He had indeed sent His angel to testify these things, He Himself is the root of David; He is the offspring of David ; and He is the bright and morning star. When He was upon earth and the jews came tempting Him He asked them as to the Christ whose son He was to be, they answered, "The son of David," He said to them, "How is He then His Lord," for the Psalmist had said, Jehovah said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool. He is before all, above all, the Creator of all. He was the source from which David had sprung, the author of his existence, and yet as a man he had come of David's line, of his house and lineage, and by right of primogeniture was David's heir and entitled to the throne.

It is of the deepest import to note that when the Lord speaks His first words are the announcement of His coming ; His last repeat it, and in both is added the word, quickly. This is the hope of the church ; this is the separating truth that is intended to guard the saints from the allurements of the world. It is this, which burning brightly in the heart, evokes the deepest affection towards the coming One, and the most ardent longing for the rapturous moment that will reveal Him, and transform the waiting soul into His own likeness,

giving at the same time an enlarged capacity of apprehension, which [will enable the saints to understand the unutterable, inexpressible things, that were heard and seen in the third heaven, to which he had been caught up, by another apostle. But the Lord still delays His coming ; He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance ; and this long-suffering of our Lord is salvation to many souls. Mark, it is not that all should come into some religious associations ; nor that all should change their minds ; one and the other may be the result of repentance ; but if there has been no conviction of sin in a soul, there has been no work of the Holy Spirit, and consequently no divine life, for when the Comforter is come His office is to reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Multitudes of persons are drifting helplessly and aimlessly on the vast sea of profession, satisfied in having a name to live while they are dead, who have never accepted the judgment of God upon them, have never taken their places before Him as lost sinners, and consequently have never felt their need of a Saviour.

The love of Christ for the church has begotten in her a reciprocal affection, and when He speaks of coming quickly, the Spirit taught bride says, "Come." But there are many of God's dear children who have

been told, and they believe it, that the Lord's coming for His people is a fiction. It is loss to their souls, for he that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure, yet if there is a heart that beats for Christ, wrongly instructed as it may be, let that soul join in the refrain and say, "Come." Furthermore, if any soul has been aroused to a sense of the burden of unforgiven sins, and shrinks from the thought of the Lord's coming, the Holy Spirit says to such an one; Come, poor soul, and drink of the river of the water of life that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and then you too will be able, through grace, to join in the ever deepening cry of the waiting saints, and say: "Come Lord Jesus." Finally there is the world at large to whom the invitation is given to drink of the river of the water of life, and it is always full. Whosoever will, is the word, and when those who have not believed stand before the great white throne for judgment, the poignancy of their deep remorse will be accentuated by the remembrance of the whosoever to whom the scriptures so often appeal.

Alas! for those, and there are many of them, who are adding to the words of the prophecy of this book, or taking away from the words of the book of this prophecy; to the one, the awful plagues recorded therein will be added; from the other, God will take away his

part from the tree of life, from the holy city, and from the many precious things within this book.

A salutation ends the revelation ; "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all saints." And but for this grace, this undeserved favor, the wrath of God would have been upon every member of Adam's race ; for as sinners all were under condemnation ; as saints who is there that has not been an unprofitable servant.

There remains now a brief consideration of the eternal state which the first part of the twenty-first chapter has reference to. The first heaven and the first earth have passed away and there is no more sea. Never more shall great ships laden with human freight go down, carrying with them their shrieking struggling passengers, or drift into the breakers and on the rocks of a hostile shore. No separating element will divide the inhabitants of that new earth ; the conditions of life will be completely changed, and sin, that root principle of evil, will have been eradicated, for then the Lamb of God will have taken away the sin of the world. Expiation for sins was made at Calvary ; sin was condemned in the person of God's Son at the cross, judgment was passed upon it, yet it remains to the present and will continue till the day of God "wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Isaiah

speaks of new heavens and a new earth of such character that the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind, but this is clearly moral and not physical, and has reference to the millennial earth in connection with Israel. Peter however speaks of the eternal state when he says : " Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." In the epistle to the Corinthians we find a fuller statement : " Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father ; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him, but when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

And now the Holy Spirit gives us a glimpse in our blessed book of that still distant future, a future to which the heavenly citizens, angelic beings, and millennial saints will be looking forward during the thousand years of earthly blessing. Man's last trial has taken place and under every form of government

he has been a failure. Innocent, he deliberately incurred guilt ; without law he became lawless ; under the law he was a law-breaker ; under grace he turned it into lasciviousness ; and under the beneficent rule of the Son of man he gave a feigned obedience. But all this has now passed ; God's purpose in having tried and tested intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth, has now been accomplished and the final and unchangeable state of things has at last been brought in, God is now about to tabernacle with men in a renewed and absolutely perfect state of things to which even the happy condition of millennial blessing will be incomparable.

When we speak of marriage and the married state, the newly married one is spoken of as a bride, but shortly after she is designated as a wife ; the reverse of this is what we have had before us in that which we have been contemplating. We first heard, in the proclamation of the coming nuptials, that the Lamb's wife had arrayed herself in her robes of spotless white, then succeeded a thousand years of married life of the most perfect agreement and oneness of mind ; not indeed as often in earthly marriages where half the life is spent in a process of gradual assimilation, and the other half in vain regrets over the mistakes of the past. This, how different ; the wife has had her Lord's

mind without a shadow of a thought of doing anything not in accord with His holy will. But a thousand years have rolled their undisturbed course and again the Lamb's wife is presented to us, and how ravishing the thought that all this period instead of diminishing her attractions has but added to them, and at the end of the thousand years the wife is still a bride in all her attractive and undimmed beauty.

How blessed and intimate will be the communion and confidences of love between those who have thus been united in such holy bonds. The future will have no unhappy surprises; no thought of misplaced or unrequited affection; no anxiety as to old age with its decrepitude of body and imbecility of mind; nothing to mar the happiness of the present; no fear to cast a shadow over the future, but for ever, and ever, and ever a blissful existence of ineffable joy.

Oh! that the Holy Spirit may stir up the hearts of God's dear children to a deeper and more ardent affection for our adorable and ever blessed Saviour who has redeemed us by the sacrifice of Himself; who loves us with a love that many waters cannot quench, and whose love we have so cold-heartedly and carelessly requited. He has shown us this entrancing picture of heavenly glory to move our hearts, and the response has been almost imperceptible; but if in eternity one

single glorified saint should hereafter declare that the reading, when in the world, of this dissertation had been used of the Lord to make those glories more real to the soul and to quicken a flagging affection, then there will be profound thankfulness for the grace that incited the task, and sustained its accomplishment.

THE END.

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